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Vol. XV No. 2
April-June, 2015

Nartanam

A Quarterly Journal of Indian Dance

Special Issue
on
Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan

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Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan

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Nartanam

A Quarterly Journal of Indian Dance

Volume : XV No. 2 **April-June, 2015**

Sahrdaya Arts Trust
Hyderabad

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Nartanam, founded by Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Mumbai, now owned and published by Sahrdaya Arts Trust, Hyderabad, is a quarterly which provides a forum for scholarly dialogue on a broad range of topics concerning Indian dance. Its concerns are theoretical as well as performative. Textual studies, dance criticism, intellectual and interpretative history of Indian dance traditions are its focus. It publishes performance reviews and covers all major events in the field of dance in India and notes and comments on dance studies and performances abroad.

The opinions expressed in the articles and the reviews are the writers' own and do not reflect the opinions of the editorial committee.

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Publishers, ***Nartanam***

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EDITORIAL

We are happy to share the good news that the Apollo Hospitals group has come forward to support *Nartanam* with substantial financial aid. We thank Dr. Preetha Reddy, Vice Chair Person of Apollo Hospitals for taking an interest in the work that we are doing and helping the publication. Apollo Hospitals has indeed set an example of how a leading corporate group can help our country not only in terms of providing premiere health care but also strengthening the roots of its arts and culture. We have to thank Dr. B. Venkataraman (Retd. IAS, D. Litt.), for providing us the moral support through his deep faith in our work which has stood us in good stead. We also thank the core team of volunteers/advisors who generously provide their expertise and time which contributes to the success of *Nartanam*. We are happy that Apollo Hospitals has joined us in our endeavours to put *Nartanam* on a firm footing.

It is a proud moment for us that this issue is a special on Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan. Her name needs no introduction since she strides like a colossus on the Indian cultural scene. A mere editorial cannot extol her vast contribution to diverse fields of Indian culture and the arts. Her bio-data could fill reams of paper, a brief version of which is published in this issue for the sake of the younger generation which has not been a part of the age she has impacted upon so immensely.

Dr. Vatsyayan is a polymath who acquired a distinguished education, a couple of Masters degrees in India and USA and a Ph.D. in the days when Indian women were not so emancipated. She had the courage of her convictions to learn dance from some of the greatest maestros of the country and abroad. Her persona amalgamates the ingenuity of an artist, the exactitude and analytical insight of a scholar and the perspicacity of an administrator and policy maker. Wide is her reach and area of work — History, Education, Sanskrit, Buddhist and Pali studies, Tibetan studies, Archaeology, Anthropology, archives, museums, heritage institutions, and conservation programmes. She is a visionary dancer, scholar, author, institution builder, and an ambassador of the arts and culture of India. She founded and directed the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.

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The greatest challenge in bringing out a special issue on Dr. Vatsyayan was identifying a person of a stature who could write the opening piece for this issue or interview her. The vast archives of the Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) offered us two interviews of her by Dr. Prem Lata Sharma in the years 1997 and 1998 and we chose to transcribe the Hindi interviews for our opening piece with due permission from the SNA for which we are grateful. We followed it by an interview of Dr. Vatsyayan at the SNA's studios on 18 November 2014 by Smt. Leela Venkataraman, Dr. Sunil Kothari, and Madhavi Puranam. Eloquent and incisive were her responses as were her expansive and insightful analyses.

The editorial team reflected that while one was aware of Dr. Vatsyayan's books, which are the tomes of reference for any dance student and researcher, her articles, reviews, and lectures scattered across various publications were not widely known. It was felt that a collection of such writings would be a cherished treasure for the readers of *Nartanam*.

Then came the issue of compiling an appreciation of Dr. Vatsyayan by eminent people from all walks of life who have witnessed the stalwart at work and have been touched by her mammoth contribution to Indian art and culture. Also an appreciation and critical analysis of her works was proposed which we realize is material enough for a couple of Ph.D.s. The compilation of her speeches at seminars, universities and other forums in itself would be a huge task. With a note that we would like to undertake these tasks for a second part of this special issue, we present in this issue an assortment of Dr. Vatsyayan's articles and reviews with due permission from their publishers and the author. However, because of space constraints we had to regretfully leave out many other articles, reviews, and lectures.

This is the first time in the history of more than 14 years of *Nartanam* that an issue will consist of more than 275 pages with no extra cost to the readers.

We have received an overwhelming response to our special issue on Odisha Folk Dances. The responses ranged from "Why on Odisha only?" to "Why on Folk?" There was amazement at the variety of folk forms in Odisha. Some others said it did not interest them for the issue had nothing about other states.

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We submit that it was a special on one state and that in the years to come we shall cover all the states and even other countries. There were suggestions as to how one should have contained the riot of colours in the layout while others were mesmerized by the splash of colours bleeding to the edges of the pages.

We want to remind our readers that this project was executed on a shoestring budget, which was impossible without the toil and tears of the dedicated team members of *Nartanam*. However, our Odisha readers have rejoiced in our efforts and have placed bulk orders with us though we wish we had the same interest cutting across regions in the rest of the country. India is a vast and varied country. Why shouldn't south Indians read about Manipuri? And why shouldn't Punjabis know more about Kuchipudi? We are a fortunate people to have an immense cultural menu. The message is: take your choice. Enjoy!

The point to ponder is that while we respect our ethnic/regional roots should our love for the arts not take flight across borders, castes, communities and language divides? I am reminded of a student at the Hyderabad Central University who hailed from an interior Andhra village questioning agitatedly during my lecture, "Why should I study International Dances which are alien to me and the importance of which I cannot comprehend in one semester?" He was assured that the university was only trying to open a small window to the world. Two years later he headed a group of students to win a dance choreography contest. He based his creation on Indonesian and Sri Lankan dances to which he was briefly exposed during a short semester. Mighty oaks from small acorns grow.

Madhavi Puranam

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For the Kind Attention of Readers

1. With immediate effect, individual copies of the current issue of *Nartanam* will not be available for sale. Only bulk orders will be entertained. Those who wish to purchase a single copy of the current issue may subscribe for the entire current year. Only back issues are available for individual purchase. If a back issue is out of stock, a spiral-bound high quality colour/black & white Xerox copy will be provided.
2. As of now, other than the leading critic Smt. Leela Venkataraman (to write her column Delhi Diary), we have not authorised anyone to regularly review any programmes or festivals.
3. Organisers or the critics who are interested in reviewing festivals may formally write to us well in advance with complete details of the festivals. If necessary, a critic of our choice will be assigned.
4. Reviews coming in out of the blue cannot be considered due to space constraints. We are compelled to point out that several reviews that *Nartanam* has received in the recent past are either written by members of the organising team itself or by people/writers arranged by them; and lavished with superlatives. Our contents have considerable archival value and hence we are extremely selective in carrying reviews. Moreover, every single page costs us dearly.
5 However, if informed well in advance we may be able to carry previews and curtain raisers in limited words to inform our readers about forthcoming events which are significant and important.

Team *Nartanam*

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DR. KAPILA VATSYAYAN: A Profile

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, former Secretary, Department of Arts and Culture, Ministry of HRD, Academic Director, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts; President, India International Centre, Member, UNESCO Executive Board and Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha- Nominated), and presently the Chairperson, IIC-Asia Project, India International Centre is an internationally recognised art connoisseur known for her outstanding work in diverse fields of culture and art.

Born on December 25, 1928, Dr. Vatsyayan did her M.A. in English Literature from University of Delhi, M.A. in Education from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA and Ph.D. from the Banaras Hindu University. In addition to this impressive academic record she has had rigorous practical training in traditional Indian dances of Kathak and Manipuri under the great maestros Achchan Maharaj (Kathak) and Guru Amubi Singh (Manipuri) and also in Bharatanatyam and in

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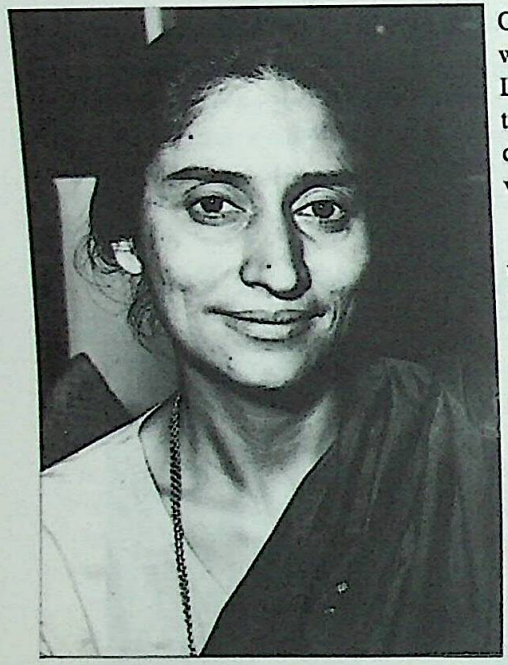

Kapila Vatsyayan

Odissi. She has also worked with Hanya Holm and Juana de Laban in modern dance techniques, and trained in the dance notation of Dr. Rudolf von Laban.

She has taught at the universities of Delhi, Banaras, Philadelphia, and California (Santa Cruz). She is a recipient of Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship. She is a Fellow of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the French Academy of the Study of Asian Civilizations, the Sangeet Natak Akademi and the Lalit Kala Akademi. She is a Life Trustee of the India International Centre.

Dr. Vatsyayan combines in herself the creativity of an artist, the rigour of critical insight of a scholar and the acumen of an administrator. As advisor, administrator and policy maker in the Government of India, she has been responsible for policy and programmes of culture in its interface with education as also with the institutions of archaeology, archives, museums and libraries. She has been associated with the establishment and development of many libraries, museums and archival repositories. The blueprint she drew up, at the instance of the then Prime Minister- Rajiv Gandhi, for the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) provides evidence of her vision and multidisciplinary approach. She is presently the trustee of the IGNCA.

Recognized internationally for her outstanding work in the diverse fields of Culture and the Arts she has spearheaded policy framework for programmes of art history, education, Sanskrit, Buddhist and Pali Studies. She was responsible for establishing many cultural and educational institutions, such as the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, (now Central University for Tibetan Studies) and the departments of Archaeology, Anthropology, Archives, Museums and other heritage institutions. She has been actively involved in and has initiated many

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conservation programmes. Her work as writer, editor and organizer has been highly applauded. Path breaking exhibitions were conceived and curated by her in India and abroad, particularly the Image of Man in Festival of India, U.K., and the Concept of Space, Time, *Akara* and others at the IGNCA, New Delhi. Dr. Vatsyayan is the project promulgator of the Interactive Multimedia Presentation of the Gita Govinda by the IGNCA which was released on 27 May, 2015 in New Delhi. The presentation consists of text (Sanskrit and English), paintings and over 17 hours of video documentation including recitations (Sanskrit and English), explanation of songs, musical renderings, dance performances, interpretation and critical evaluation of songs, of selected *astapadis*. Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan has coordinated and supervised the execution of this project for over three decades with meticulous care and commitment.

For five decades, she has been actively involved in international cultural relations, both bilateral and multilateral. She has negotiated more than forty agreements with other countries and has been closely associated with Russia and East Europe. She was also Secretary of the Indo-US Sub-Committee of Museums. She was instrumental in the establishment of the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (National Museum of Man) in Bhopal.

Dr. Vatsyayan has authored nearly 20 books and over 200 research papers. Amongst her publications, the *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts* and the *Square and the Circle of the Indian Arts* are considered as landmarks in interdisciplinary studies. Her books and other publications are internationally acknowledged as pioneering path breaking works of critical scholarship. She is an editor of many volumes on primary texts on fundamental concepts, such as concept of space (*Akasha*), of time (*kaal*), of Panchabootha (*Prakrit*); of primary elements, chaos and order, etc. Her writings renowned for their universal vision, multi-disciplinary approach and as instances of new and more appropriate paradigms of understanding the cultural fabric of India extended to Asia.

Widely travelled in India and abroad, she has received several recognitions/ honours, nationally and internationally, such as: Makhanlal Gold Medal; Ravi Kanta Prize of the University of Delhi; the Barbour Memorial Fellowship of the University of Michigan; Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship; R. P. Chanda Award and Campbell Award of the Asiatic Society; the CORD Life Time Achievement Award for dance scholarship; the JDR III Rockefeller Award for Cultural Studies.

She is a recipient of many awards, including the Life Time Achievement Award from the Sahitya Kala Parishad and from the Government of NCT of Delhi. She

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received the Lalit Kala Ratna Award on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the Lalit Kala Akademi. She has been recognized for her work in National Integration through the Srimanta Sankaradeva Award, Government of Assam (1990);and Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award 2000; Woman of the Year award from Cyprus. She has been honoured with D. Litt. (Honoris Causa) from Banaras Hindu University; Mount Holyoke College, USA; Manipur University; Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA; Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi; Vacaspati of Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetham, Tirupati and Vidyapati of Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath. She was conferred the Padma Shri in 1990 and the Padma Vibhushan in 2011.

SOME PUBLICATIONS OF DR. KAPILA VATSYAYAN:

Books

1. *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts,* Sangeet Natak Akademi, Delhi, 1968.
2. *Indian Classical Dance,* Publications Division, Government of India, Delhi, 1972.
3. *Traditions of Indian Folk Dance,* Clarion Books, Delhi, 1975.
4. *Traditional Indian Theatre: Multiple Streams,* National Book Trust, India, Delhi, 1972.
5. *Dance in Indian Painting,* Abhinav Publications, Delhi, 1982.
6. *The Square and the Circle of the Indian Arts,* Roli Books International, Delhi, 1983.
7. *The Jaur Gita Govinda- A Dated Sixteenth Century Gita Govinda from Mewar,* National Museum, New Delhi, 1980.
8. *Miniatures of the Gita Govinda- 17th Century Manuscript of North Gujarat,* Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur, 1980.
9. *The Bundi Gita Govinda,* Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, 1981.
10. *Gita Govinda in the Assam School of Painting,* Publication Board of Assam, 1986.
11. *Mewari Gita Govinda,* National Museum, New Delhi, 1987.
12. *BHARATA-The Natyasastra,* Sahitya Akademi, 1996.
13. (Editor): *The Cultural Heritage of India,* Vol. VII, Part 1, The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, 2006.
14. *Incredible India-Arrested Movement-Sculpture and Painting,* Wisdom Tree, 2007.

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15. *The Darbhanga Gita Govinda,* Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 2011.
16. (Co-Editor) *Aesthetic Theories and Forms in Indian Tradition,* Vol. VI, Part I, Centre for Studies in Civilizations, New Delhi, 2008.
17. (Editor) *Transmissions and Transformations-Learning through the Arts in Asia,* Primus Books, Ratnasagar P. Ltd., New Delhi, 2011.
18. *Asian Dance-Multiple Levels,* B.R. Rhythms, Delhi, 2011.
19. *Plural Cultures and Monolithic Structures*, Primus Books, 2013.
20. *Vasudeva Sharan Agrawala: A Selection, Collection of essays in English by V.S. Agrawala*, SahityaAkademi, 2015.
21. *Metaphors of the Indian Arts and Other Essays*, D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd, New Delhi, 2015.

International Reports:

1. *The Theoretical Basis of Asian Aesthetic Traditions,* UNESCO, Beirut, 1968.
2. *Some Aspects of Cultural Policies in India,* UNESCO, Paris, 1971.
3. *Contribution in Traditional Performing Arts through the Mass Media in India*, Asian Cultural Documentation, Centre, Tehran, 1975.

Monographs:

4. *Kathakali,* (Co-author Alain Danielou), International Institute of Comparative Music Studies and Documentation, Berlin, 1967.
5. *Ramayana and the Arts of Asia,* Asian Cultural Documentation Centre, Tehran, 1975.
6. *The Karanas of the Temple of Sarangapani,* Department of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu, 1982.
7. *Arts of Kerala Kshetram,* Government Sanskrit College, Tripunithura, 1992.
8. *Bharata and the Natyasastra,* Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1999.

Memorial and Other Lectures (a select list):

1. *Metaphors of Indian Art*, Gopinath Kaviraj Memorial Lecture, Banaras Hindu University.
2. *Margi and Desi- Segments or Polarities, the Artistic Traditions of Eastern India*, Banikant Memorial Lecture, Guwahati, 1976.
3. *Nature, Tradition and Originality- a Paradigm for Art Historical Study*, Nandalal Bose Memorial Lecture, Kala Bhavan, Shantiniketan, 1985.
4. *The Square and the Circle of the Indian Arts*, 9th Ananda Coomaraswamy Memorial Lecture, Lalit Kala Akademi, Delhi, 1980.

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5. *Indian Art: The One and Many,* 17th Nehru Memorial Lecture, London, 1993.
6. *The Multidimensional Nature of the Discipline of Art History,* K. D. Bajpai Memorial Lecture, Indian Art History Congress, New Delhi. November 2002.
7. *Culture and Development*, Birendra Bhattacharya Memorial Lecture, Guwahati University, 2002.
8. *Plural Cultures, Monolithic Structures,* Sixth Sabira Zaidi Memorial Lecture, New Delhi, 2002.
9. *Meru, Mountain, Monument and Myths,* Dr. L. M. Singhvi Lecture delivered on the occasion of Kathleen Raine's Birthday, London, 2002.
10. *Political Freedom and Creative Response,* Yusuf Meherally Centenary Lecture, Mumbai, 2003.
11. *Institutionalizing Culture: Contemporary Issues of Administrative Systems* - Published in the volume in honour of Professor V. K. N. Menon brought out by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (New Delhi, 2004).
12. *Culture and Science.* Platinum Jubilee lecture of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi delivered on 10.1.2009.
13. *Education through the arts: values and skills.* First Smt. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya Memorial Lecture delivered under the auspices of the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT), New Delhi on 29. 5. 2009.
14. *Knowledge: Fluid Cultures, Frozen Structures.* Dr. S. Radhakrishnan Memorial Lecture- 19. 3. 2010 - under the auspices of Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.
15. *Pluralism and Diversity in South Asia.* Presented at the SACEPS World Conference on South Asia: Democracy, Sustainable Development and Peace held in New Delhi on 24-26 December 2011.
16. *Dr .D.S. Kothari-A Modern Rishi.* Ninth Dr. D. S. Kothari Memorial Lecture delivered at IIC on 30.3.2012 under the auspices of Shantipeeh India, Udaipur and IIC.
17. *Interrelationship of the Indian Arts: Theory and Practice*, Pt. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande Memorial Lectures, 2000–A series of two lectures instituted by the Indian Musicogical Society in collaboration with the Faculty of music and Fine Arts, University of Delhi, Delhi were delivered on November 13 and 14, 2000 at the Shanker Lal Hall, Delhi

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Kapila Vatsyayan in Conversation

With Prem Lata Sharma–1997 & 1998
and with Leela Venkataraman, Sunil Kothari, and Madhavi Puranam–2014

Kapila Vatsyayan in conversation with Prem Lata Sharma–1997

Prem Lata Sharma: It is hard to find a starting point of our conversation due to your vast *oeuvre*. We see you as one of the most important thinkers on Indian arts–their interrelationships and origins, and Indology. You must have been influenced and guided by various people as you have been closely asso-ciated with dance and

Kapila Vatsyayan (left) and Prem Lata Sharma

PREM LATA SHARMA was an eminent Indian musicologist, vocalist, scholar, and educator. Trained as a vocalist under Pt. Omkarnath Thakur, she obtained her doctorate from Banaras Hindu University. A polyglot who knew eight languages, she also studied under great scholars like Prof. P.L. Vaidya, Pt. Mahadev Shastri, Pt. Gopinath Kaviraj, Prof. V.S. Agrawal, Pt. Hajari Prasad Dwivedi, Pt. Brahmadatta Jijnasu, and Pt. T.V. Ramachandra Dixitar. She was the pioneering head of the Department of Musicology at Banaras Hindu University. Her work is a seminal contribution to Indian musicology.

LEELA VENKATARAMAN and SUNIL KOTHARI, eminent dance critics and writers, are advisors to *Nartanam*. MADHAVI PURANAM is the chief editor of *Nartanam*.

Excerpts from the interviews of Kapila Vatsyayan conducted in 1997 and 1998 by Prem Lata Sharma and in 2014 by Leela Venkataraman, Sunil Kothari, and Madhavi Puranam have been transcribed from the Sangeet Natak Akademi archives and are published here with due permission from the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi.

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music since childhood. I know this because, when I was around eleven years old, I attended school with you for a couple of months in Delhi, a school run by Shantiniketan alumni. Although we were not in the same class, I vividly remember you dancing at a small function. I was one among the audience.

You not only learnt from the teachers at the school but also from legendary teachers such as Achchan Maharaj (Kathak), Meenakshisundaram Pillai (Bharatanatyam), Amubi Singh (Manipuri dance). I don't remember the names of the other teachers but you were also trained by the legendary teachers at Kerala Kalamandalam in Kerala during Kavi Vallatol's time. So, tell us about your inspiration, training, various experiences and interactions with legendary teachers and scholars. You must have heard oral histories ranging from 60 to 150 years from your teachers. Please share them with us.

Kapila Vatsyayan on her early days

I was a student then and so am I now. I had the privilege to live and learn from some extraordinary teachers. What I learnt in dance was different from normal education. Since you have brought memories of school, I will start from there. The school which you mentioned, now houses the Kerala Club. That school had people such as Shantidas Gupta and others from Shantiniketan. It was started by my parents. My father was a well known lawyer and freedom fighter and my mother was a well known Hindi writer and our home was the hub for many eminent people (as told to Madhavi Puranam in Delhi, 2015). We spent our childhood in Calcutta (Kolkata) and during that period Kolkata was under the influence of the Bengal renaissance. On my mother's insistence teachers for Rabindra Sangeet, Kirtan, classical dance, and classical music used to come to our house. Learning from the teacher who came to teach classical dance was very risky as my elder brother (Keshav Malik) used to tease him by pulling his hair. We learnt Rabindra Sangeet, classical dance and music. Shantiniketan had started by then and people were joining it. People like Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Bishambernath Pandey, Aruna Asaf Ali, and Balraj Sahni used to come and we knew them (as told to Madhavi Puranam in Delhi, 2015). During that time, the paintings of the Bengal school had become very famous.

When we came to Delhi, my parents thought of doing something for the children of Delhi. My father was the honorary general manager of 35 schools in Delhi (as told to Madhavi Puranam in Delhi, 2015). As you know there was nothing in Delhi especially in the New Delhi locality which was called Raisina then. If there was anything in Delhi, it was in the area behind Jama Masjid or in Ballimaran, or

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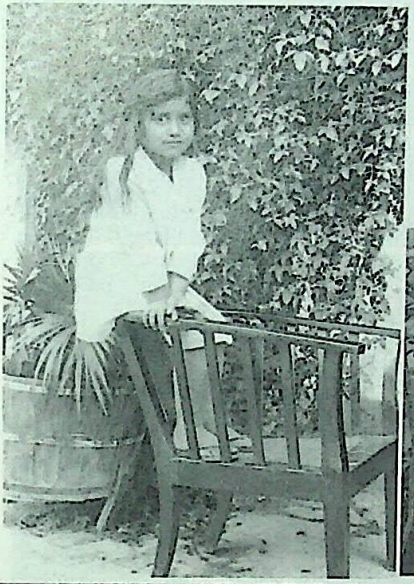
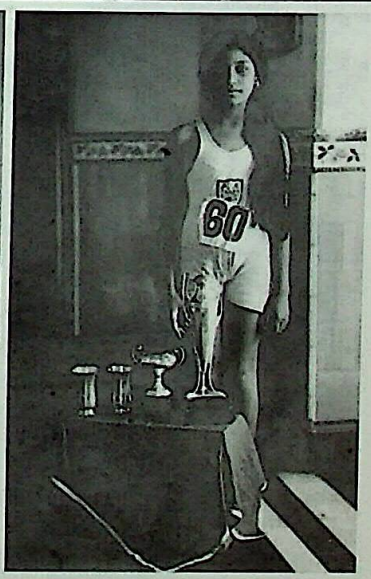
Early Days





Clockwise from top left:

Kapila as a young girl;

Kapila with her friends and mother Satyavati Malik (L to R: Sita, Subhash, mother, Kapila, Thambi, and Ratna);

Kapila, the swimming champion;

L to R: Kapila's brother Keshav Malik, Kapila, father Ram Lal Malik, mother, and younger brother Subhash Malik.

(All photos courtesy Usha Malik)

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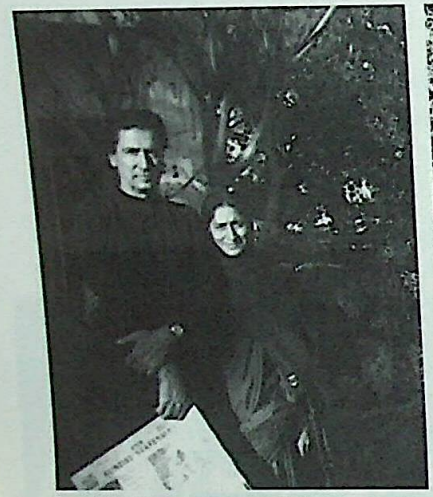

Clockwise from top left:

Kapila with brother, late Keshav Malik;

L to R: Krishna Dutt (friend), Prof. Irene Winter (friend), Kapila, Usha Malik (sister-in-law);

Kapila with her mother;

With brother Keshav on Rakshabandhan;

Late Dr. Sachchidananda Vatsyayan (spouse)
Photo courtesy: Wikipedia;

Kapila (right) with Zarine (sister-in-law) (left), and her nephews.
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in Haveli Haider Quli where people such as Bundu Khan and Chand Khan of the present *Dilli* and Agra *gharanas* must have been living. The middle class had no connection with them. We used to go to school near Jama Masjid by bus. If there was any form of music and dance in Delhi it was in the *kothas* of Chawri Bazaar. It is important to understand this part of history which today's generation might not know. There have been many changes in my own life time.

So, when our family started living in Connaught Place, my parents decided on doing something for the education of children. That is when the influence of Bengal inspired them to incorporate teaching of dance and music. I learnt dance from Ravi Roy. The Chaudhary brothers were a musician and dancer duo and there was also a violinist named Virmani. When I look back and try to categorise that dance, the *puja nritya*, I find that on the emotional level it was an oriental dance inspired by the paintings of Bengal. There was probably no relation of the body movements with any particular *raga* and *tala*. It was pre-Uday Shankar oriental dance. It was around 1939-40. We had never seen Uday Shankar and those who taught us then had also not seen Uday Shankar.

On Oriental dance

The dance which we used to learn in the School of Music and Dance (opposite the British Motor Car Company) must be something like the American dancer Ruth Saint Denis must have seen in Kolkata and named it oriental dance. This dance just had a glimpse of the orient and was without any particular *raga*, *tala* or *mudra*. There must have been a song or tune to which people danced. But, that school inspired me to learn dance and music; it laid the foundation for dance and made me curious about Indian mythology. In the other school founded by Nirmala Joshi, School of Hindustani Music, which later became Sangit Bharati, we did a dance drama based on *Kumarasambhavam*. I had never heard the name of Kalidasa then. The dance drama was presented at the South Indian club. I played the role of Kartikeya and probably all my family members were part of that dance drama.

We were doing similar things in the Indraprastha School. My actual education started during one of the dance dramas we presented at the school where I presented a dance involving various styles. I didn't know anything but had a strong imagination. I played various roles such as Aparna in Rabindranath Tagore's play *Sacrifice* and then *Ardhnarishwar*. The audience appreciated it a lot. Nirmala Joshi, who taught us Physiology then and who became the first Secretary of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, was sitting in the audience and one of the many people

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in the audience was Achchan Maharaj. During those days people from Rampur had started coming out. After performing I went and greeted Nirmala *didi* who introduced me to Achchan Maharaj and asked me to touch his feet. I touched his feet even though we had no such tradition in our family due to our association with the Arya Samaj .However, the blessing which Maharaj gave me became the blessing of my life. He said, "You dance very well, but you need proper guidance and education." This incident happened in 1940. Of course I had very limited training then. But the guru's words had struck me hard and have stuck with me till now.

After this, my other school started and people of Delhi like Shivraj Bahadur and the Haksar brothers were behind it. This school was started in the building where Pandit Haksar lived. The school which was inspired by Shantiniketan and which was the first dance school to be opened in Delhi was closed down. People of Delhi felt that there was no need for two schools. Following this, the oriental dance, oriental music and Rabindra Sangeet took a backseat; instead traditional Hindustani dance and music were established in Delhi, and the slates of our mind were cleaned again and lessons started from *ta-thai-thai-tat*. The daughters of Dr. Sen (Principal, Hindu College), Malavika and Manasi, Sharan Rani Mathur, I and Reba Vidyarthi were the students.

Association with Achchan Maharaj

Achchan Maharaj
Photo Courtesy: Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi

Then, that school was shifted to G Block (above the MR stores). There I learnt from Achchan Maharaj which gave me the foundation of dance. Birju *bhaiyya* was a kid and he used to play with a little *dholki*. There I found a firm grip over the language of *tala*, *tatkar* and theory of dance. Whatever happened to my body due to Maharaj's strict training is another thing, but it changed my thought process. What I learnt was different from what my fellow students learnt. Every year I was allowed to perform at the annual function, but apart from that there were many restrictions for me. I could learn dance for my pleasure but was not allowed to come out with it. In fact, my father told me once that if he saw my photograph in any newspaper, he would stop my dance classes. Even Maharaj

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knew that I was not cut-out for performance or 'demonstration' like it was called in those days. Sometimes these demonstrations were conducted in some rich business man's house which was attended by people from Chawri Bazaar as well.

From 1941-1944 Achchan Maharaj taught me only *dha-ta-ka-tunga, dhage-dhige-tha*. He used to ask me to do from *pehli, barahvi, tehervi, savai, dhai,* or *teen*. I was studying in college then but he would make me do *dha-ta-ka-tunga* every day for two hours. Some days he would ask me to do it in *teentala* and on other days on *chautala, jhaptala, dhamaar* and so on. One day I was struck by him and in retaliation I stopped going to his classes. I thought I was not being given any chance to perform in demonstrations and to top it all what I received from my guru was punishment for minor mistakes. He used to laugh and say, "*Betale shuru ho jao*" (you rhythm-less begin now). For two days both Maharaj and I didn't eat anything. Then, Maharaj went to a Hanuman temple, offered sweets and came to our house. He knocked at the door and asked my mother. "Where is that girl?" My mother told him, "She won't come to learn from now on." After that I came out crying to see Maharaj. Then, what Maharaj told me was another lesson for me. He said, "I can make even a stick dance. You foolish girl, you aren't able to understand that what I am teaching you will either perish with your cremation or you will give it to my son. And whatever I am teaching others will be washed away in the Yamuna."

I was extremely lucky to have teachers such as him who taught *bandish* to me and to the others he taught composition. He said, "I have opened the doors of *bandish* and a whole ocean of *tala* is in front of you but you can't see it." It was then that I understood that these *tukdas* that were being taught to me were a variety of permutations and combinations of *tala*. Later, as I have mentioned in my writings, the entire play of the variable and invariable, and, the one and the many lay in this *bandish* training.This command over *tala* and *laya* helped me to have an easy grasp over other dance forms.

I have many memories of Maharaj, and I would like to share another one. It was the rainy season and our house was on the first floor in Connaught Place. One evening Maharaj came and said, "*Bitiya,* I want to sing *thumri* today." He started singing at 9 p.m. and I don't know how the night slipped into morning. He sang and did *abhinaya* throughout the night on a single line. I vividly remember the experience and the minute details of his *abhinaya* of the *nayika bheda* and *abhisar*. He created the entire atmosphere. For me it opened the doors to a combination of dance and histrionic expression (*abhinaya*).

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I underwent rigorous training for six years. I learnt *abhinaya* after completing the *nrtta* (pure dance) as nobody teaches *abhinaya* before completing pure dance. Maharaj often used to say, "Knowledge of music is necessary for *abhinaya*. Without learning music a dancer is handicapped. To do *abhinaya* the dancer should be able to sing." He was strictly against learning *sitar* as it would spoil the shape of the finger and instead advised us to learn singing, giving *thekas* and playing *pakhawaj*. Then, he would ask, "Without knowing this how would you correct anyone? The wrist work needs the help of every finger." All this was the minutiae of dance, which unfortunately is missing in the performances of many of *Kathak* dancers today. He did the dance drama of *Kumarasambhavam* and also *Brajleela*. Sumitranandan ji came for the performance. I remember the festival of 1945 where many were present including Tara Chaudhary, Devendra Shankar, Prabhat Ganguly, Ram Gopal and others.

PLS: My father took me to this festival which was organised in the Ferozeshah Kotla grounds. I still remember that silver was so cheap then that the brochure had small silver bells tied to it. I didn't know that you were involved in that programme. I used to see Nirmala ji every day. I remember Ram Gopal's performance. Can you tell us something about this programme?

KV on Maharaj and *abhinaya*

There was a girl with Ram Gopal. She was Janaki. What a dancer she was! Janaki performed with Ram Gopal. I don't know where she is now. But when I saw Janaki's performance, I was mesmerised. I had never seen anything like it before. She had purity of posture. She was such a great dancer that one would think a *Chola* statute was standing alive in front of you. I had learnt Bharatanatyam too. There were Vijayraghav ji and Devendra Shankar here.

Maharaj did the dance drama *Kumarasambhavam* and a *Brajleela*. This dance festival took place in 1945. Nirmala ji was the force behind it and we organized it. I danced but I was told that someone else's photograph would appear in the papers instead of mine. I had so much respect for my father that I knew that even this restriction was for my benefit. I also realised that I was studying in a college where there were only 12 female students and 1,100 male students. If any photograph would have been published everyone in the college would have known about my secret life of dance.

So, Maharaj danced and Ram Gopal, Nina Thimayya, Tara Chaudhary were there. There were many others in the audience. I also witnessed my first experience of jealousy in the dance community. I would not name the renowned

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dancer who taunted Maharaj on his bulky body and raised doubts on his dancing capability. He said, "After witnessing mesmerising performances of masters and beautiful women, now we have to see this man." But, Maharaj's performance left the audience spellbound. Tara Chaudhary said, "After watching him, I feel I should quit dancing." What I learnt from that performance was the relationship between one's legs and the earth is very important. And what we often forget today in dance is '*vazan*' (weight) which doesn't mean using thousands of anklets and do all sort of theatrics. One came to know of how the tala and the *vazan* could blend together beautifully.

The trip to South India

Now let me share my experience of South India. On the one hand I had seen Janaki and on the other, I had read books of Alice Bonner and had spoken to Nirmala ji, who wasn't open about inviting *Kathakali* performers to Delhi. Anyhow, we invited them and they presented *Dakshayaga* which kind of frightened the Delhi's audience and many fled the scene at the sound of the *chenda*. Although people appreciated Janaki and Ram Gopal's performance, especially his famous 'Eagle Dance', we were scolded and criticised for this as a lot of money was spent on the programme. I was pursuing my B.A. (Hons) in English Literature then. After this event I became curious and wanted to know more about the South. I wondered what the source of Janaki's performance was. I felt like going to the place of origin of the source and wanted to understand the relationship between temples and the dance.

I left India after my graduation, I had the privilege to live with Rudolf von Laban and his daughter in Manchester. He was a scholar of modern dance movement studies and the one who scripted the notation system of dance. This opportunity gave me new vision to see Indian dance because whatever I was doing until now was practice. When I came back to India, I visited South India.

I was touring South India when I met Meenakshisundaram Pillai a couple of times. I also met Bharatam Narayan Swami. I didn't learn Kathakali but I wanted to see the *vyayama* (exercise). At Kerala Kalamadalam women weren't allowed to watch early morning exercises. I was adamant and stayed at a guesthouse for a fortnight. I used to go to Namboodiri's house every morning, I had to suffer a lot, people suspected that I was a prostitute. Then, Vallathol allowed me to see the exercise. The communication with legendary gurus like Ravunni Menon, Raman Kutty, Krishnan Kutty and Padmanabhan (all three were young), and Kunju Nair helped me understand the *abhinaya*, *tala*, and the pure form of

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Kathakali. I couldn't spend much time with Meenakshisundaram Pillai as I had to study as well as teach, but I was close to Rukmini Devi Arundale. So, from Kalakshetra I brought S.V. Lalitha, Yamini Krishnamurthy, Kalyanasundaram, and the brother of Dandhayudhapani Pillai to the school. I was also the principal of the Sangeet Bharti school.

Guru Amubi Singh and Manipuri dance

Guru Amubi Singh

Now, coming to the story of Manipuri dance; in the oriental school we learnt a little bit of Manipuri dance from Devendra Shankar and it was Uday Shankar who led us to Amubi Singh ji. Amobi Singh came to Delhi and taught us minute details of Manipuri dance. But, he couldn't stay there for long and he promised to send a student to Delhi. So he sent Mahabir Singh, who initially taught me. Mahabir Singh who taught at the Modern School died in Delhi after a mad dog bit him. By then Maharaj ji was no more and I brought Birju Maharaj from Lucknow. All these things happened during 1950. I had the opportunity to live with guru ji (Amubi Singh) for some time and guru ji promised me that he would complete the work he had entrusted to Mahabir. Guru ji came and stayed with me and we travelled to Manipur often. He taught me the same things which Achchan Maharaj taught me though in a different manner. He taught me about the relationship between earth and our legs, work of wrist, hand, toe, and leg. And if ever I would put my feet violently on earth he would scold me and scream, "Don't hurt the earth!"

I learnt *tala* from Maharaj; from south Indian dances I learnt virtuosity, *angsanchalan* or *ang-shuddhi*; *Parishkar* (refinement) from Rukmani Devi, and Amubi Singh told me that dance is a path to worship. I never saw guru ji dancing in front of an idol of God, I saw him doing *nritya-seva*. I went to Vrindavan, especially Radha Kund, many a times with guruji. In Radha Kund there were two ponds, one each for Radha and Krishna. He would ask me to swim. My task was to go from one pond to another. Since I could swim I would cross from one pond to another. For years I used to go to the Govind ji temple and other temples in Manipur with him. I noticed another form of dance there, hundreds of people dancing together. Then, I understood that dance isn't a

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small thing which can be limited to some *ang* on stage, it is rather like an ocean, infinite. You go to Kerala, full of coconut farms, and discover its rich literature; in Chidambaram and other places in the south, I was amazed by *gopurams*; in Manipur, you get drowned by the spirituality and devotion. What guru ji told me last is my *mantra*. I want to reiterate here that guru ji told me that he had not taught me how to dance but he had given me the eye for dance which he had not given to anybody else. I was rougher than gravel but had received a rich *taleeem*. I haven't learnt anything except that education is an organised process by which we can express the level of beauty. I learnt from Guru Amubi Singh the relationship between the eye and the earth.

PLS: You have spent time with Balasaraswati and have seen many of her performances. You have also seen Shanta Rao perform from her early days. Perhaps you can tell us about the different schools of Bharatanatyam. We would also like to know about Odissi and lastly how did modern dance affect your vision about movement.

KV on Bharatanatyam and Meenakshisundaram Pillai

Guru Meenakshisundaram Pillai

As I narrated earlier, I became curious about Bharatanatyam after watching Janaki's performance. I still remember looking at Rukmini Devi's beautiful toes hidden behind the curtains; this was when she staged her production *Kumarasambhavam* at the Regal, Delhi. Before talking about Bala and Shanta, I would like to share an incident— my first visit to Pandanallur to meet Meenakshi-sundaram Pillai.

I was teaching in Delhi then. During the college vacation, I used to visit South India. When I reached Meenakshisundaram's house in Pandanallur, on entering I saw an old man, who was wearing nothing but a small red loin cloth (*langoti*) lying down on a *chatai* (mat) on mud floor with his back towards me in the courtyard. The way he was lying down it gave me an imagery of Vishnu resting on his *sheshasai*. I just stepped inside and sat in the courtyard as there were no doors and I was not sure whether he was sleeping. Then a lady came out and asked the purpose of my visit. I told her that I wanted to meet *Thaata*. She asked me to wait. I had read a little about *asana* before going there. After

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looking at him I understood the beauty of *shayanasana*. After sometime, he woke up and put on an *angavastram* on his shoulders. The way he sat up was striking. Then, one of his female students Rajarathnam came and he started teaching her dance. Meanwhile, two hours had passed without speaking to him. He just looked at me and carried on with his work without asking me about the journey or the purpose behind the visit, his total concentration was on Rajarathnam. Then, I asked him if I could join as a student. It was then he spoke to me.

I didn't learn any composition; I couldn't learn much from him but, I got a vision. I asked him several questions. He knew very little Hindi and I knew a little bit of Tamil. I asked him many questions about Ram Gopal, Shanta Rao, Rajarathnam, the Pandanullur style, Balasaraswati's style and so on. This training was similar to the training I received from Maharaj and Amobi Singh. I learnt about the Pandanullur style and its relationship with *adavus*. He was a very strict teacher. But, he was jovial by nature and could tell about the command of his students on the dance form. We established a connection and he spoke frankly about Ram Gopal, Shanta Rao and others.

Perhaps we could develop this trust as I was there to understand the form and not to perform anywhere. He told me at last that, "You have many questions in your mind and you can ask endlessly about them. What happens in jatiswaram? What are varanam, padavarnam and tanavarnams?" Then, one day he had enough and told me, "You ask too many questions!" I politely replied that, it takes years to learn and I wanted to learn as fast as I could about the soul and technique of Bharatanatyam. He replied, "I am 90-years-old and do you know about my condition? I am sitting on the bank of a sea looking at it. Sometimes a big wave comes and touches me and that is my art. You are very impatient. You leave everything and come to me for ten years, we will sit together on the bank and may be then the wave which touches me will give you some drops too. So stop asking questions."

This was a very big lesson for me. I realised that importance of introspection (*bauthik chintan*) in arts. This teacher was telling me that there is an experience beyond analysis and thinking, and art takes shape the day that experience touches someone. Although he taught many people such as Mrinalini Sarabhai, Rukmini Devi Arundale and others, the leading exponent of Meenakshisundaram Pillai's style is Shanta Rao. The ocean which he spoke to me about, the waves of the ocean were given to Shanta Rao, who not only received immense training but also an invaluable repertoire.

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The temples of south India have a *shikhar*, *gopuram*, *garbhagriha,* etc. and Bharatanatyam is equivalent to the south Indian art of building temples. It is exactly like entering from the door and passing by the *ardhamandapa*, then the *mahamandapa* and eventually reaching the *garbhagriha*. This form of Bharatanatyam is today called the repertoire, from alarippu to tillana. But, when one sees the varnam and when I saw Shanta Rao's varnam, tanavarnam and padavarnam, that was the Cholas' procedure of erecting temples. The *svar*, *tana*, and *sahitya* formed the structure. External shape of the temple is different from the internal shape, likewise, varnam has three *kalas* and a *pallavi*, *anupallavi* and *charanam* at the observational level, and I have yet to see a proficient dancer such as Shanta Rao.

As far as *tala* is concerned, I must say that for people associated with *Kathak*, it is more complex than that of Carnatic dancers. But, the play of *tala* in the Pandanallur style, the *angshuddham*, and the movement of the body is entirely different from the Balasarswati style. They also have a distinct style of *adavu*, different leg movements, different hand and elbow movements. The way we have *gharanas* here, in north India, they, in the south, also have different qualities of every *gharana*. I must say that Pandanallur has a strict aspect when compared to the *gharanas* of Madras. *Kalakshetra* has a relation with the Pandanallur style since they also make geometrical forms, and triangles, etc.

Balasaraswati

Bala was an extraordinary woman. Everyone knows about her acting skills. I once asked her, "People say that you do jatiswaram, varnam, etc. Why don't you directly come to acting as people would love your *abhinaya*?" She shot back, "Are you mad? How can I directly do *abhinaya*? One does *abhinaya* only when the body flows like butter. And without dance the body cannot become soft as butter."

I spent a lot of time with Bala and her mother at their house in Madras. Bala wasn't only a dancer, she was a musician. This reminds me what Maharaj told me, that a dancer without the knowledge of music is handicapped because Indian dance is based on the foundation of music whether it is a *bandish* or a varnam. Bala had music inside her and she used to patiently

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express it from *anga* to *mukhja*. Today *abhinaya* has to do with *sanchari* but Bala was a poet. I remember, we were sitting and she created numerous metaphors on a single line.

One would say that Bala led a very tough life. Because of her grief, she didn't teach dance to her daughter Lakshmi. After learning Bharatanatyam and other forms, what I understood is that all these are contextual. I can learn Bharatanatyam but would not be able to perform as an artist unless I comprehend Tamil literature and Carnatic music. That is why I urged Bala to teach her daughter Lakshmi. But, she was adamant on not teaching as she didn't want Lakshmi to undergo what she went through in her life. However, in the later years of her life, she would tell me that she wanted Lakshmi to sleep near her so that she could teach her even at night. Bala would say with moist eyes that even if she dreamt of something which she might have forgotten she would like to wake up and teach Lakshmi. And whatever she could give to Lakshmi she gave. I met Bala two months before she passed away. I asked her how she was feeling from inside? She answered that, she knew she was standing in a queue and would die soon. I knew that Bala was invoking death. If dedication towards arts can elevate you to acceptance then that meditation is successful.

On Rukmini Devi Arundale and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay

Rukmini Devi Arundale

A lot has already been written on Rukmini Devi's family background, education and how she established Bharatanatyam. She was a sophisticated intellectual. Everyone knows that her interest in dance was aroused after a conversation with Anna Pavlova in which Anna told her to go back and learn dance in India. But Rukmini Devi wanted to establish this form in Indian society and some of her important contributions are establishing dance in the middle class, educational system and institutions, *angshuddham*, and special focus on *aharya*. She brought change everywhere.

I had the opportunity to attend the Sangeet Natak Akademi's first Dance Seminar in which Balasaraswati, Rukmini Devi and many other stalwarts participated. There was also a heated debate between them in the middle of the seminar. Rukmini

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was at the front and Bala at the back. They debated about the differences in styles, *angashuddham,* how a raga is sung, *sur* and *tala* in various ragas, and how nishad is used in komal etc. During this debate, Rukmini Devi said, "I have cleaned Bharatanatyam". Balasaraswati reacted to this very angrily. But, when I see this today I think that when artists meet, discussions like this often take place. At hindsight, I felt that Bala was right as she carried a legacy and knew the pain from a social view point. She was also aware of the depth of dedication an individual and a family offered towards arts. The tension between the tradition and different schools was manifesting there. One shouldn't just confine this debate to two individuals. That debate was essentially between two schools of thought (*pravrttis*) which manifested through the conversation of two individuals. I felt that Rukmini Devi was also right as she brought Bharatanatyam to a prestigious place in our society. So, that debate had lessons for me. The reason behind sharing this experience is that today's generation is unaware of the fact that the dance which they perform is just sixty-years-old and there is another history behind that.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya

I would like to end our discussion on Bharatanatyam with this experience. Years ago Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was the Chairperson of the Sangeet Natak Akademi and I was the Vice-Chairman. You were also a member of the council. I proposed to revive the *aradhana utsav* in Chidambaram. I was scolded by Kamaladevi and Rukmini Devi. As I have three mothers:one biological, the other two being Rukmini Devi and Kamaladevi. So, I went to Madras and told Rukmini Devi, as I never hid anything from her, that I have brought Yamini Krishnamurthy and others for the *utsav* and we would go in the sleeper class and live in the *chhatram* to perform the *nrtya* and other *utsav* pujas.

I told this to all three mothers. Kamladevi and Rukmini Devi told me, "Kapila you are undoing everything we have done. We brought these arts out of the temple and you are taking them back! What has happened to you? You are our daughter." My answer, which I still think was right, "I entirely agree what you did when you did was right. What I am doing now is also right. I don't agree with

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what was happening in the temples but I want to bring back the pure feeling of dancing into the temples as these forms and their plots were inspired by the temples. That feeling is somehow corrupted on the stage and the form undergoes change after coming to the stage. I am not saying that these dancers should become *devadasis* again, I am merely saying that they should experience that these forms are ways to worship."

Kapila Vatsyayan in conversation with Prem Lata Sharma–1998

PLS: In the first interview we discussed Bharatanatyam and Kathak, You spoke at length about Guru Achchan Maharaj and Guru Amubi Singh. I would like you to discuss oriental dance, which we discussed briefly in the last interview, in which you gave reference of people who came from Shantiniketan and taught *puja nritya* but it was not a part of traditional dances such as Kathak or any other form. Can you tell us about Uday Shankar and people around him.

KV on Oriental dance and Uday Shankar

Uday Shankar

Oriental dance and Uday Shankar has to be seen from a historical point of view. When oriental dance was established, it was a western view of the orient. And because of this, William Jones and others brought many things to light. Oriental dance was a component of orientalism. The role that the Bengal School played in painting was played by oriental dance in dance, because, oriental dance was in support of Indian sensibility and opposed to schools of Western realism. The oriental dancers were inspired by Ajanta and Ellora caves, styles of Japan and China, but they did not have thorough knowledge of the intricacies.

Second, this was against dance, as this dance was a way of entertainment and here the inspiration was provided by paintings. The case was similar with Uday Shankar, who initially went to England to study painting and met Anna Pavlova who was coincidently looking for an Indian dance partner. Uday Shankar, was endowed with a beautiful body and had also received rigorous music training in childhood but had no inclination towards dance. Shankar studied painting under Sir William Rothenstein in London and started designing dance dramas of Radha-Krishna after seeing miniature paintings and murals of Ajanta and Ellora. The

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experience was derived by the painting and not by traditional dance forms. So, they tried to recreate paintings in the *bhangimas* (postures).

During that time, something else also happened. When Uday Shankar was in Europe, his suppleness, grace in *bhangima* attracted attention. It is interesting as on the one hand he left painting and on the other hand he was inspired by Alice Bonner, who was a designer, dancer and sculptor, and who in turn was inspired by Ajanta and Ellora during her work on Shiva and Parvati. After getting inspired from Ajanta and Ellora, Shiva's importance in Indian sculptures particularly that of Shiva-Parvati and Uma-Maheshwar, Uday Shankar first presented the 'chitra' (icons or figures) and then tried to depict sculptures through the human body. He was ably assisted by Simkie, a beautiful French dancer, and Zohra Segal, who had trained under Mary Wigman, and her sister Uzra were important members of his company.

The third influence on him was that of Timir Baran's music and impressions of various folk arts from Bengal, the Santhals, Rajasthan, Banares, and Uttar Pradesh which he had seen in his childhood. So what he created using all this was a rare experiment in performing arts but it had a creative aspect and gracefulness in *anga bhangimas*.

Since the Oriental discourse was going on, the European audiences liked it very much. This dance had nothing to do with traditional Indian dances such as Kathak and Bharatanatyam. But Uday Shankar's refined consciousness was so touched that after returning to India, he realised that he had to study the various dance forms of India. This awareness and humility is a sign of a great artist. After establishing the Almora centre in 1938 he brought Kandappa, Sankaran Namboodri (Kathakali), and Amubi Singh (Manipuri) to the centre. He then started using traditional dance in his repertoire to create an altogether different body of work.

A lot has already been written on Uday Shankar's contribution including Joan Erdman's seminal book. As far as my association with him goes, I first met him in Delhi when he came to perform at the Regal. Uday Shankar, Simkie, Zohra Segal, Uzra, and Debu da (Debendra Shankar) were there. Robu (Ravi Shankar) wasn't there for sure. At the flat we demonstrated whatever we knew. They asked if I could join them but my parents refused saying that, "She can't go as she has to complete her studies." Then, when the school in Almora was established I went there. When the Almora centre disintegrated it was like the fall of Constantinople, as after disintegration, their experience and expertise spread all

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over India. Sachin Dev Burman went to Bombay, then Narendra Sharma, Prabhat Ganguly and Simkie, and before that Devendra Shankar came to Delhi. For years, we learnt the Uday Shankar style from Devendra Shankar. So while I was doing *riyaaz* with Achchan Maharaj, I also learnt from Devendra Shankar who was at the Sangeet Bharati. In 1945 at the Firozeshah Kotla programme, on one hand Achchan Maharaj presented *Brajleela* and *Kumarasambhavam* for which Sumitranandan Pant wrote the verses, and on the other hand Devendra Shankar's compositions were also danced.

Then, Prabhat came. Today, people speak about the environment and conservation. But years earlier when M.S. Randhawa was the Deputy Commissioner, we organised a massive tree plantation drive in the Qutub area. Prabhat-da, I and many others danced. Debu-da lived here for many years and composed many ballets. After him, came Amubi Singh who later sent his disciple Mahabir Singh, an extraordinary Manipuri dancer and performer. Before Narendra Sharma, Mahabir Singh used to teach at Modern School where he did the 'Aadha Mera' ballet with the children. Mahabir died very young and I haven't seen an artist like him.

Almora is a different chapter but there was a fusion of the expressive style of Manipuri dance and Uday Shankar's practical aspects. Mahabir used Manipuri *ang* in the ballet as he had the opportunity to live with Uday Shankar. So Uday Shankar's great contribution to Indian dance is not only the development of a new style but also giving a new vision to his colleagues and disciples. That is how many of them created their own language. Sachin and Shanti Bardhan carved out their own styles. All these genres have a place like the others.

PLS: I remember you telling me that you would like to speak on western dance as well.

KV on Western dance:

Western dance is one of the most important aspects on my life. As I told you earlier about my training under Achchan Maharaj, Devendra Shankar, Amubi Singh, Mahabir Singh, and Vijay Raghav Rao. After all this I went to the US to study English, education and western art. Coincidentally, when I reached London, I met Rudolf von Laban. And later when I went to Michigan, Juana de Laban, Rudolf von Laban's daughter, was teaching there. I learnt modern dance from her. In modern dance, during those days (1948-49) were Mary Wigman and Hanya Holm from the German school and Martha Graham. I learnt modern dance from Laban. This was modern dance, not ballet. One of the greatest things which I

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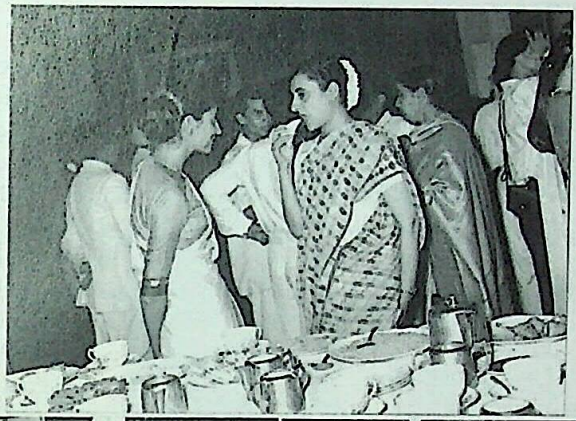

Clockwise from Top:
With Indira Gandhi and Cultural delegation which returned from China circa 1960;
Receiving the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship, 1971;
Welcoming the then President Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy with Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay at SNA award function, 1977;
Conferred D. Litt. in a special convocation of Banaras Hindu University at Women's College, Varanasi- 3.3.82.

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From top:

Addressing the gathering after receiving D. Litt.;

With Pandit Birju Maharaj;

With Chairman, Sangeet Natak Akademi, P. V. Rajamannar and Secretary, SNA, Dr. Narayana Menon (left) at the exhibition of medieval European musical instruments, Rabindra Bhawan, circa 1965.

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learnt from modern dance was not only physical training but also their notation system which gave me an analytic sense. I had already learnt about movement. We learnt a lot of it but not everybody can repeat it. And even in that, sometimes doors are opened, for instance Achchan Maharaj gave me everything in *dha-ta-ka-tunga*. But, I learnt about the awareness that which joint was moving from where; physiology; the analytical part etc. I also danced a lot with Hanya Holm in Colorado and worked in a movie and enjoyed it too. But the vision which it gave me towards Indian dance was extraordinary. I could write about it with a new vision, because it forced me to read Bharata's *sastra* as I had not read it yet. Until now I had no familiarity with the *sastra*. I had learnt the practical side from legendary teachers but when I started learning modern dance and movement studies I came to know about the nature of space, how to time it, the angle formed or a sphere of a movement etc. I learnt about the texts in more detail. I shall always be grateful to them for giving me the vision otherwise I would have been just repeating things. Coming back to Achchan Maharaj, when I brought Birju from Lucknow, this vision and experience of modern dance was very helpful. Another aspect of this was that I am probably the first person who thought and did Indian dances like Bharatanatyam and Kathak in Laban notation which didn't have enough symbols for the hand gestures (*hasta abhinaya*). I had to evolve symbols for these. I am still associated with the international organisation which deals with Laban notation. It is important to say here that one can sing whatever one wishes to but when it comes to do notation, it is very difficult. I had to learn this. I also learnt the Danish notation system.

PLS: Before talking about your writings. Let's talk about the changes that have taken place in the last 50 years of our lives. And I don't know if we are moving in the right direction. I think we have lost our way. Don't know why, but is this a blind race. All these questions come to my mind. I am sure you are also confronted by them. All these started with 26th January parades in Delhi which were then copied by the states. We started presenting people from remote areas on the big stages of the cities. We have done a commendable job because people in big cities have started learning more about the arts. Till the 1960s, nobody in any city knew about Kutiyattam. Likewise, you said that in 1945 when you invited Kathakali performers to Delhi people fled away. This isn't the situation now. So city dwellers are at least aware about these artists who were brought in from their distant villages. What problems did they face? What minute changes did they go through? You must be grappling with these issues too. In which direction should we go from here? Please tell us about this.

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KV: You have asked a very important question. When I look back over the past half century from the point when people didn't know about Kathakali and, the difference between Kathak and *nautch* or when Ram Gopal brought Janaki, I also remember the day when we had to go from house to house to sell tickets for Balasaraswati's performance. Just day before yesterday, I went to the India Habitat Centre for 10 minutes to see a fusion of Indian dances and Flamenco. I noticed that the auditorium was full. Likewise in the Sangeet Natak Akademi's "Swarna Samaroh" there wasn't a single empty seat. The musical concerts are often full as well. I feel elated to see this but how many *ragas* can the audience identify? How many can understand the *tala*? Why are they watching the performance? Sometimes I feel the urge to go to the stage and ask the audience what they saw and how much they understood. Everyone says that the dancer danced well, covered the stage well or that there was loud applause all around. One aspect is related to the audience. How educated is an audience and how much are they able to understand? The second aspect is related to the dancer.

What is the impact of *kalabaazi* (artistry), limelight, and *vaah vaah* for a couple of hours on the art of a dancer? We know its impact on the music where even renowned musicians do this *kalabaazi* in which *tala* and *raga* are put aside. Even dance has all these 'chamatkar' elements, people understand that the *sam* has come and everyone claps. The impact of all this for instance in Kahtakali is that it lost its minute *abhinaya*. Except in the Sangeet Natak Akademi where at last year's performance of Kathakali and Kutiyattam, dancers beautifully performed with detailed *abhinaya*. On the other hand, the *sanchari* aspect of *abhinaya* is reduced. People now want to go on time and want maximum art within a limited time. And all these were chamber arts and it is natural that in front of thousands you can only do dramatised work. Due to this the *sanchari* and *vyabhichari bhava* of *abhinaya* in Indian dance was converted to *natak* (drama). Drama and dance are entirely different. *Satvik abhinaya* cannot be understood from a distance. This is one impact on classical dance. Second, in classical forms, *ekaharya abhinaya* became the ballet form as brought by Uday Shankar. One artist's performance on stage is fragmented to many artists' performances. It is like an artist performing one fragment of alarippu and another taking up the next fragment in another *tala*, one doing the footwork and the other displaying the hand gestures. This is an important issue because in these modern times we have come from a holistic vision to a fragmented one. The result is that we have named what is fragmented in dance as modernity. Some experiments were good and interesting, but I will be hesitant to say that a new style is created.

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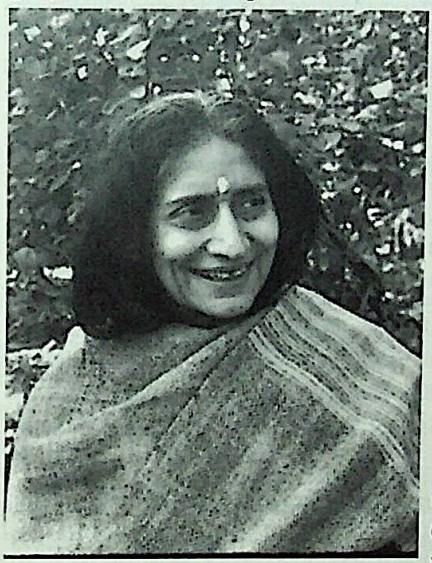
In styles like Bharatanatyam which is not very old and the four brothers who were called the "Tanjavur quartet" presented a repertoire from alarippu till tillana at the court. That repertoire had a social context relevant to the courts or the temples of Tanjore and the *aharya* was suitable for that context.

The consciousness which has emerged today, the dancer doesn't accept the social context of dance. The literature aspect like *nayika bheda* was not accepted because of feminist discourse. In music, We were told that the *riyaz* of "sa re ga pa dha sa or sa re ga ma ni" , should not be brought on stage; similarly the *adavus "taki ta tak di mi ta ki ta taka dimi ta tai ta ha ta tai ta ha"* which is the life of Bharatanatyam and which we used to do as *riyaz* need not be brought on stage but it has now turned into the presentation. *Abhyasa* is important but it need not come on stage; however, it becomes evident that the dancer has gone through the discipline of the *abhyasa*.



Kapila Vatsyayan

PLS: It's like someone practicing *taan* on stage.

KV: Right, so what is happening in Bhartanatyam is that the *panjar* (skeleton) has become the face. In the Indian tradition what was indirect became direct in the modern tradition. People may not be able to understand this but my eye and education tell me this. Should I call it modern or traditional or creativity? Good or bad whatever the result is I like it and I have no hesitation in accepting it. It is very beautiful but this claim that it is new is what I have some objection to. But it is a new trend. Abhinavagupta succinctly writes, "I am critiquing my teachers and whatever I am saying wouldn't have been possible without their existence and had I not stepped over the steps." So, we have to get out of this mindset. How much of it will be serious or eternal is the way to see this tradition. This is a big challenge. We have to sacrifice our *aham* (ego) first because tradition demands it. Today's artists express their ego on stage not that of absolute neutral feeling. The day

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artists start expressing that absolute neutral feeling, only *bhava* will remain, the posture of dance will be there and what is being expressed will be expressed through the artist but not by the artist. In other words the artist will become a medium. Then art will happen and we will bow down in reverence.

PLS: Don't know if this will ever happen, it worries me to see the direction in which we are going. Sometimes I think that fabulous work is being done but is it really the case?

KV: *Vistar* (elaboration) has its own logic, right? So when we do it in music it has depth but in dance this isn't always the case. Depth without elaboration isn't possible. Here sometimes there is only elaboration and depth is lost. But it will happen with patience. During our times, there were no inducements like fellowships, or getting stage appearances, foreign tours or cultural subsidies. So we did *riyaz,* and, when we did *riyaz* we felt like dancing and derived pleasure. When you have inducements, both good and bad, all around you, it will be painful to leave them.

PLS: Only a handful of artists will leave these.

KV: I will give the example of one artist. Shanta Rao, for instance, whatever she learnt from Meenakshisundaram Pillai and Ravunni Menon in the last 40-45 years, she is just practicing it without thinking about the commendations or shows. She had to suffer a lot and face criticism but still she was devoted to her own *parampara* (tradition) and it needs a different kind of devotion, loyalty and a rigorous discipline.

PLS: This art demands very strict discipline, both internal and external. Let's talk about your writings. Your first book was *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts.*

KV: Before that came *Indian Classical Dance*, the others were written later. The latest one is *Bharata: The Natyasastra* which was published last year.

PLS: What I like about your way of thinking is its totality. How arts are interrelated and you have analysed *Geet Govind* with paintings, we would like to re-live this journey in brief.

KV: I can say that I am fortunate and don't know whom I should thank for having such a good *sanskar* (education). I remember my legendary dance masters and their intellectual education; Sir Maurice Gwyer, Saroj Singh and Bhattacharya who taught me English literature; Juana de Laban who coached me in modern

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dance; and the critics I.A. Richards and Edmund Wilson. I would like to share what my supreme mentor Vasudevsharan Agrawal told me when I was going abroad to study western art. My mother took me to him at Rabindra Bhawan which was then called the Firozshah Road hutments. The place where Rabindra Bhawan stands today was the place where Vasudev ji used to live. Vasudev ji, an archaeologist, during that time was collecting statues of Buddha and the Ashoka Pillar which were installed at Rashtrapati Bhawan, strongly suggested me to visit the Burlington House show of Indian art when I visited London. My mother took me to him for his blessings and he gave me two photographs – one of a sculpture of a mother and daughter at Khajuraho and another of an idol in Bhubneshwar, and asked me do whatever I wanted to do but just keep these photographs on the table of my *almirah* and look at them frequently. I was enjoying my studies in London but suddenly an idea germinated based on what he had given me while I was reading Ananda Coomarswamy's *Dance of Shiva* and learnt about the historical view and theoretical view of Indian aesthetics. I had already read Aristotle, Plato, and Longinus. I questioned myself that this is another world and what was I doing here? At last I went to Benares and studied at the feet of Vasudev ji. He accepted me as his first student. Had I not received his affection and strict discipline, I would never have been able to write anything. And I bow my head and salute him because he opened many doors for me and always pointed me in the right direction.

PLS: It is very sad to see that no university teaches the work of Vasudev Sharan Agrawal or even Coomaraswamy.

KV: I was very lucky in Benares, I won't call it Varanasi, to get teachers like Vasudev Sharan Agrawal, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Rai Krishan Das, and Rajbali Pandey. What fascinating people these were. After coming out of the university I lived in Godhuliya and sometimes used to go to Kaviraj Gopidas's place in the morning or afternoon. I learnt from silently listening to the evening conversations of these scholars. Vasudev ji cleaned my mental slate just like Achchan Maharaj. And Achchan Maharaj once struck me on the leg with a stick; whereas Vasudev ji used to chide me and say, "Someone please take this idiot away!" But what a teacher he was. I had crazy ideas, I once told him that I wanted to date sculptures on the basis of the posture between the toes and the thighs, and not from the ornaments. He asked me, "How will you do it?" You must remember that the first floor had thousands of photographs. For four days he would mask the photos and asked me about the place or related empire. Was this a Kushan piece? Was it made in Amaravati? And when Motichand came he introduced me as a crazy girl

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who came to be a student and that I would be his first Ph.D student in Indology. After showing me almost five thousand photographs in four days and asking me about them he said, "Kapila you have impressed me by identifying all the photographs." He further added, "I have been looking at them for the last 30 years. Why didn't I see what you saw?" After that there was a conference on Indology in Delhi where he asked me if I would like to present a paper on sculpture and dance? Thus started a long journey of organised study on Indian sculpture, painting, and literature. In this study, the practical experience, education, and theoretical knowledge of my teachers helped. This is why I consider myself extremely fortunate to have got scholars in both theory and practice.

You were lucky as well to get Omkarnath Thakur, Pt. Gopinath, Vasudev Sharan Agrawal, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, and Dr. P.L. Vaidya.

PLS I learnt sacrifice, dedication, and affection from them. I have never seen such affection towards students which Dr. P.L. Vaidya had. I don't say that I have managed to follow his footsteps but I tried doing the same and not exploit the students. I wanted to prepare five students and I managed to mentor them. Thankfully they are moving forward and I am very happy with this. It's all the grace of God.

I was talking about affection towards students and would like to give just one example of Dr. Vaidya. When I was researching under him on Goswami and a mention of Sudev Shukla came. In the catalogue of the Baroda Oriental Institute, I located one by Bhudev Shukla, so Dr. Vaidya requested them to send me the manuscript which came in a fortnight. It was the year 1951/52. Upon close reading we found that these are two different persons and I don't know what he (Vaidya) thought and asked me to make a copy of this manuscript by hand. He probably wanted me to learn to read manuscripts. I was wondering why he is asking me to make a copy of this since it had no relation with my research. Meanwhile he requested on his own another manuscript from there and asked me to note this manuscript as well. He kept the transcript with him and left for Pune in summer where he paid a non-refundable sum (Rs. 250 upfront) from his own pocket to the oriental book house to publish the copy without even asking or informing me. Then, he asked me to send an introduction for my book. The book was published in 1952 and while he was passing through Mathura, he gave me 100 copies as royalty.

KV Today neither the guru nor the sishya would do this. You produced many good students. You taught them many songs ranging from Western music,

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American, French, and also Indian. You also gave them guidance on how to examine texts. I also have many such memories of Vasudev ji who encouraged me to read *Shathpath Ramayana* and *Rigveda*. I never knew of their relationship with music and dance, and he would ask me to come back for discussion in the next ten days. This kind of holistic teaching is known as a multidisciplinary approach in today's teaching. He would give me a week to read archaeological reports from 1901 to 1918 in a week. This gave me a way to look at temples, *stupas*, architecture, sculptures, paintings, and other primary resources. All this broadened my horizons. I had another opportunity with Rai Sahib. The Bharat Kala Bhavan was housed in the corridors of Maliya Bhawan. Raja bhaiyya was also a student then. I was deputed to assist him and do the cataloguing. In this process I looked at various schools of painting like Mewar, Tarai, Jodhpur, Bundi, Kota, Pahari, Guler, and Nupur. It takes years to understand all these. After some point of time, whenever Raja bhaiya asked anything, I would just bring out paintings with closed eyes or recognise any school of painting like we do with *swara* for various *ragas*.

And a third person who wasn't exactly our teacher but was a teacher-like figure to both of us was Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, who was good-hearted and a polite man of taste. I often used to eat at his house because I didn't have any heater at my place in Godhuliya. His wife used to serve me delicious food in the kitchen. One day I was eating rice, chilli hot vegetable curry, and sauce made from the leaves of *neem* which was extremely bitter. I was trying to eat it thinking how to leave it but I couldn't. Then, Pandit ji came from outside and loudly chided me saying: "This woman came here to do research on Indian culture. She is so busy that she can't recognise the bitterness of Indian culture. And until you are able to recognise it you won't be able to do your research." I can never forget that culture is not only sweet, but also savoury, bitter, and all these are essential. During my research under Vasudev ji, I once took my thesis to show him. He told me to leave it there and collect it in the morning. The whole night I couldn't sleep. Vasudev ji and Hazaari ji went through my thesis carefully. What affection. I can never repay them.

PLS We can never pay them back. The only way we can show our gratitude is to mentor our students better.

KV: After submitting my thesis, I didn't do any dance or painting. You mentioned Republic Day, that was another experience which was related to folk and tribal arts and because of it I got ample opportunities to travel. Though I couldn't go back to Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh I travelled to Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. After delving into it, I understood

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folk arts and wrote two books—*Traditional Indian Theatre* and *Folk dances of India*. The folk dances of India and traditional Indian theatre are one aspect of Indian art, and, classical Indian dance, classical music, literature in arts, and dance in Indian painting is another. And we won't be able to understand Indian arts, particularly dance, comprehensively without looking at these two aspects together.

The the seed of Vasudev ji's knowledge was deep inside me and I also had opportunities to attend Agni Chayan Yantra anushthan which aroused curiosity and then reading, listening to Krishna Yajurved and Samved again. One modern English philosopher wrote that the *Upanishads* are highly sophisticated thinking of speculation in India while *Brahmanas* have bogus rituals. So when I started looking at these through the knowledge given by Vasudev ji, I understood what is written in the Upanishads about the *vidhi* and background of *brahmanas,* and, how the theories of Indian arts originated. This led to writing *The Square and the Circle of the Indian arts*. This book includes all the art forms and goes into the basics of the theories often giving birth to the philosophical theories which explore the relation of broad vision and human nature with forms of arts. The philosophy of one and the many is most vocal in the Indian *tala*. The last book in this series is that of *Natyasastra*.

Sometimes artists who do only practice discard theories. Shambhu Maharaj often used to say that he didn't know about theories and had nothing to do with them. But after reading and re-reading the texts I understood that we need a different type of vision for these texts and whatever research was done in the 19th and 20th centuries was from the western point of view. So whatever questions we raised, I think, were unsuitable. We asked questions like the name of a writer, we don't know if Vyas was one person or a group of persons. The same is the case with Bharata. Why don't we know the biography of any writer in a country where people meticulously keep records of past generations? And then we are told that India does not have a sense of history. Basically it is demanding the sacrifice of ego, which holds true in the case of music and dance. It doesn't matter who are you, where are you from. You should bow your head to the text. Your ego is nothing in front of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. That is why we keep asking about who came when and try to establish chronology in a linear fashion. This is the continuous flow of a stream. Changes take place but Ganga's water keeps flowing. So we must see texts like a stream which has undergone changes and consciousness, both constant and transient. Shastras have to be looked in this view. And the transient aspect about which Bharata writes in *Natyasastra,* irrespective of what I said, you must consider time and place before taking any decision. This attitude towards time and space is entirely different

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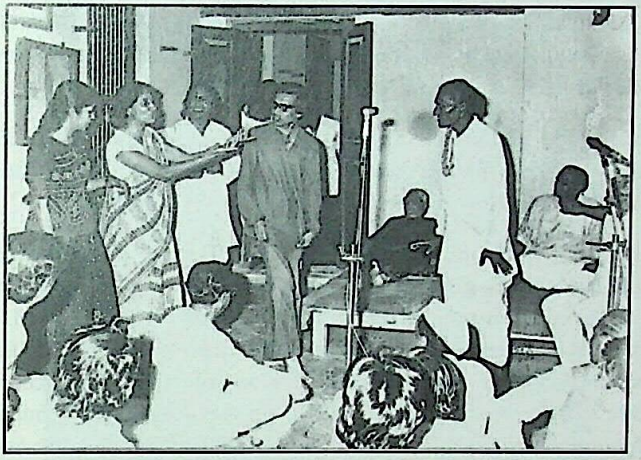

Clockwise from Top: 1979 Bhavai Festival, Morvi, Gujarat;
With Sagolsem Kaliadaman Singh, Nata sankirtan, Manipur, SNA awardee, 1979;
Gujarat adivasi festival, Hallol, April 1990;
During India International Dance Festival, 1990 with Singhajit Singh;
With Shyamananda Jalan.

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from the linear calendar, I thought of taking it up and trying to show that structure presents a holistic vision and to fragment it and say that these are the theoretical and practical aspects of dance, drama, and music can be hazardous.

PLS: Likewise, in our arts, it is very difficult to say that this is drama or dance. And sometimes there is confusion in music and dance, music and drama, and, dance and drama.

KV: If you measure milk in yards, then you will get only one type of result. In our thought we have categorised, and you have raised the issue of categorisation in the context of *marga* and *desi* many times. You have also said that *marga* and *desi* are inter-penetrative and not exclusive, the same thing has been said in *Gita-Govinda*. You are much more knowledgeable about it than me. When does a word become music or vice-versa? The music, *tala*, *rekha*, *bhangima*, *raga*, *bhavana*, *satvika bhava* which are the words of the *Geet Govind*, what else are they if not the wholeness?

PLS: That is why it inspired dance, music, painting. Almost our entire literature that is being sung in every Indian language 12th century onwards, is about *Gita Govinda*. There was a little earlier but after *Gita Govinda* that is the only form left. What a pervading influence it made. *Pada* were written in Gujarati, Marathi, Braj bhasha, Awadhi, Bangla.

KV: In my study, I found over 3500 manuscripts in 21 lipis (writings or languages) of *Gita Govinda* in India. S. K. Dey once said that there are 15 commentaries of it but my calculation is of 55. It is depicted in 15 painting styles and it is sung from temples of Jagannath Puri to Guruvayur and many other places in Kerala, Pandharpur to Bhavnagar, Gujarat to Govind temples in Manipur. The same thing is sung by Jannardhan inside the Guruvayur temple and outside the Ambalwasi and female servants sung it in kummi nritya, in Mithala women sing in marriages and it is performed on stage in every style, in music it is present in every style, the tradition of Radha Kalyanam is present in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka.

PLS: In the end, could you tell us about your vision behind the IGNCA publications?

KV: Whatever little I grasped and got knowledge of, intellect, artistic, *samskar*, I have to repay a lot of debt. I don't think that I will be able to repay everything in this lifetime. I have to pay *pitra rin*, *matri rin*, *guru rin*, *rishi rin* is always there so with this feeling and because incidentally that responsibility was given to

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Kapila Vatsyayan at Sanchi

me, I understood that in the Indian arts, until now, we have looked only at the aspect of practice, performance, we had seen every art individually as autonomous but we understood that in order to express it as well as to understand the dependency, it is important to find and bring to light the primary sources a well. This is also what my guru told me. You also mentioned P.L. Vaidya in this context.

PLS: He also used to say it. Even though, he had worked a lot on the text-editing, sometimes even in that era, people used to ask what have you done? He used to reply that I am doing this research so that you can do further work on this. Otherwise what will you work on or study? People often say that you haven't written anything yet.

KV: I thought that the primary texts are not found. That is why in the IGNCA, we established Kalatatvakosh under the leadership of Laxman Shastri Joshi. And your contribution in both institutions is immense. Without you it wouldn't have been possible to do it. I always had the curiosity that in the Sanskrit language and tradition, words are not mere words, they are replete with multiple meanings, dimensions and context. I always had in mind that, the concepts of Indian vision have a relationship not only with etymolygy but have a vision, layers, and dimensions. And that is why when these words enter arts, they carry history with them.

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PLS: Every word has a journey.

KV: Exactly.... Every word has a journey. And we have forgotten it today but in the prevailing language today whether a word is small or big, there is a *viniyoga*....

PLS: And in music and the *Natyasastra* there is *viniyoga*.

KV: Words have their own journey and have to express that journey. I asked Laxman Shastri Joshi about the binary opposites. He said pain and pleasure, these are the things.

PLS: It is termed *dwand* in Geeta.

KV: Yes *dwand*. I said that binary opposites are termed as *dwand* in the Geeta. He said that even though they look so they are complimentary in reality.

PLS: Ah-ha. There is a lot of difference in *mithun* and *dwand*. He said everything here.

KV: They are complementary not binary opposites of each other. There is no pleasure without suffering. It is not a question of conflict between suffering and pleasure. And in this conversation my vision opened. Second thing which he also said and you also wrote about it. You remember, you wrote an article on the *triyak* in relation to the Vedas? That article opened new doors for me.

PLS: I wrote that *abhinaya* could be both three and four.

KV: It's all a matter of calculation. But more importantly, and something which is also the intellectual foundation of the IGNCA is that this is an alternate system of knowledge based on the tripartite or four-fold division of knowledge each inter-penetrative.

PLS: It's the same with *tala* which is of two types - chaturasa and tisra; from two it becomes four and three.

KV: It's the same in the intellectual and the spiritual. What else is big, small and alien (*para*) or *tamas*, *rajas*, *sat*?

PLS: These three are quality as well as three purities (*satva*).

KV: So this system of unmanifest-manifest of a continuous refinement from this goes to the subtle of the material and the non-material of the spiritual passing through a material of a threesome or a foursome. This with the basis on which we founded Kalatatvakosh, the thought of the primary text,

PLS: And Coomaraswamy came for the interpretation.

KV: We demonstrated it in *Gita Govinda*. And all the plans of the Janpad-Sampada have the same concepts. The same things of *panchabhuta* we are

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doing in Santhali, Mundali, Maitei and in the language of the Todas, Mukuruas. The endeavour is to build bridges in the categorisation and stratification that we have done.

PLS: In one of the seminars you told me that people talk about the penetration of Brahmanic culture into Aadivasi culture. I remember that you satirically said, "What a fantastic penetration!"

KV: This is what the anthropologists say.

PLS: But, we should understand that there is a common source of all.

KV: Absolutely. It is spread in a wide sphere. It has common origination.

PLS: Yes, the stations were separated but its not that it got penetrated from one to the other.

KV: Likewise, whether it is the seed or the point which we have taken in the Kalatatvakosh and I am starting on the series of seven books on the metaphors of Indian art. It will have *beeja*, *garbha*, *bindu*, *purush*, *shunya* etc. Because *beeja* doesn't look like seed and trees have multiple forms. So you forget seed and count the branches of trees and say which branch influenced which branch? *Bindu* as you know, is not what it is called in Mathematicss. So this is what I want to do. Let's see if I am able to carry it forward or not.

PLS: Thanks Kapila-ji.

Kapila Vatsyayan in conversation with Leela Venkataraman, Sunil Kothari and Madhavi Puranam–2014

Leela V: Talking to an all-encompassing personality like KapilaVatsayan, reminds me of only one thing, trying to contain the sea in a tea cup. Where does one start? Does one think of her as one of the greatest dancer trained under one of the greatest of gurus? Does one think of her as a great thinker, an erudite scholar who has written a profusion of books on different disciplines of art? Does one think of her as the one who started the movement of understanding art in India? Does one think of her as an art administrator? One really doesn't know where to start. One has heard you often speaking about the precious gift of awareness and understanding that you have received from your gurus, whether it is Achchan Maharaj, Amubi Singh, or Meenakshisundaram Pillai. Once I became aware of your scholarship and books, I read about your understanding of the human body, the inner dimension of the body, the outer dimension of the body, the geometry of the body, what does geometry mean, how is it utilised in various dance forms.

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Kapila Vatsyayan

I read the book on Indian folk art and when I saw the diagrams in that book, I was absolutely astonished. Later, I read your book — *The Square and the Circle of the Indian Arts*, I wondered whether this awareness came from somewhere, or was it something the gurus gave you or is it just your intuitive knowledge of how the body functions?

KV: You have asked me a question which is valid. But, if I were to ask this question to myself, it would be very difficult to answer. There is one Sanskrit word, *jigyasaya*, which means questioning, questioning about self, questioning of your discipline. It is this awareness that came from practice itself and not from books to practise, let me be very clear about that. This was the result of total rigorous training, which Achchan Maharaj made me do for five years continuously. What I learnt from this practice was that the relationship between the legs and the earth is very important. That was the beginning of my awareness about oneself. It taught me about body in place and body in space, this helped me understand everything about dance and what I was doing. And what we often forget today in dance is '*vazan*' (weight) which doesn't mean using a thousand anklets and do all sort of theatrics that people nowadays do.

Leela V You have spoken about how different disciplines have given and taken from one another. The body, the mind, and the philosophy behind these.

KV: Through dance, I realised body was just an instrument to experience things. When I went to the west after my graduation, I had the privilege to live with the scholar of modern dance movement studies Laban and his daughter in Manchester. This opportunity gave me a new vision to see Indian dance because whatever I was doing until now was mere practice. I travelled all over the US with Laban and learnt a lot. I realised in the US that I needed to return to my roots, so when I returned to India my parents were surprised, as they were not expecting me to come back.

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Kapila Vatsyayan being interviewed at the Sangeet Natak Akademi's studio
L to R: Leela Venkataraman, Kapila Vatsyayan, Sunil Kothari & Madhavi Puranam
Photo Courtesy: SNA, New Delhi

After I came to India, I started travelling and started teaching in Delhi University. I wrote a book. Maharaj said there is a lot of enthusiasm but very little quality. Then, I decided to pursue Ph.D in dance, The Delhi University academic council was shocked but finally agreed.

The situation in south India was different. Women in Kerala were not allowed to watch *Kathakali* and there were many other restrictions. Whereas, I came from a highly progressive family, I knew nothing about the caste system. Why were some people not allowed into temples in Kerala? As I travelled, I started understanding the different social structures present across the country and the complex dynamics.

The situation in the South was different from the North, so was the relation between teachers and pupils. People would say things like, "She lives in Delhi has studied near Jama Masjid, what does she know about Nataraja or Chidambaram." In the South, dance and its representation was in a very strict social context, if it was for the temple it was for temple, if it was for the court it was for the court. It all happened in circumscribed space and in front of a circumscribed audience.

Editor's note: The interview continued on many issues, some already discussed with Prem Lata Sharma. The complete interview can be found in the archives of the SNA, New Delhi. The transcription of the SNA video archives done by Ankit Agrawal.

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Common Errors in Dance

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

In 1972, when all styles of Indian classical dances are well-known, established, popular and highly appreciated, it would be an audacity on any one's part to talk about errors and much less common errors. However, it is only when a language begins to be used by a large number of people at different levels that there is a danger of abuse of the language. Further when a language moves to different cultural milieu, it acquires a regional flavour and occasionally the regional flavour results from frequent liberties which are taken with the grammar of the language, not by creative artists but by poets and imitators. If the analogy of language which is used creatively and abused is extended to the field of dance, particularly classical dances, it will become clear that with the dissemination of these forms to a large number of performers and with these highly academic disciplines becoming fashionable and "in", there has been an unfortunate decline in training standards, leading to an absence of the essential ethos of these dance forms. In a word, this ethos may be described as austerity.

Our concern today is not with the socio-cultural reasons for the decline of standards and the frequent display of techniques which would have been unacceptable two decades ago, but with certain specific movements and aspects of the *Nrtta* technique in some of the forms of classical dances, particularly Bhararanatyam, Odissi, Manipuri, and Kathak.

There was a time when a Bharatanatyam dancer went through at least two years of rigorous training in the *adavus*. This was of prime importance. Posture meant first and foremost, the manner in which the dancer could stand on her two feet. This standing position so characteristic of Bharatanatyam and Chola sculpture results from the particular treatment of the lumbar and lower

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vertebrae. The spinal concave curve emerges in the *Samapada* position by pushing the torso just a little in front from the pelvis. It is observed that the correct initial position is forsaken by many dancers today, including some very well-known professional dancers. A common error in this standing position (which is the first position in the *Alarippu*) is the raising of the shoulders tensely instead of a natural position of the clavicle. The raising of the shoulders gives an effect of tenseness, but does not give the effect of a composed control resulting from the correct treatment of the lower vertebra and pushing forwards of dorsal vertebrae.

Perhaps this error is not so easily noticeable, as the other one which is responsible for the impression of lightness, of easiness and sometimes even of flippancy in Bharatanatyam. This relates again to a fundamental position. viz., the *Ardhamandali* or what is known as the *Ukkaramandali*. The entire movement pattern of the feet turned sideways and the knees in an outward bent position similar to the demi-plie in 'ballet' is the test of a good or a bad dancer. In geometrical design the dancer is tryingto achieve a series of triangles; the shoulder line may be conceived as the base of one triangle with the waist as an imaginary apex of an inverted triangle. From this apex a second triangle is conceived with the thighs as the two sides and the line joining the two knees as the base of this triangle (Fig.a). The third triangle is formed by the space covered by the two calves conceived as two lines joining at the heels of the outward turned feet. The arms reinforce this by forming other triangles on either side. The arm forms one side of the triangle and the imaginary line joining the palm and knee suggests the second side, the side of the torso and pelvis serves as the third side.

Since the training in the *adavus* is incomplete and hurried the dancer often errs in the execution of the entire *Nrtta* pattern, because she is unable to sustain a whole programme of keeping the *Ardhamandali* position, which demands an ability to control the centre of weight. Many other *adavus* emerge from this position when the dancer must necessarily keep the weight of the body on one static foot specially in open positions. This is true of the sequences of *Tai Yum Datta* as also *Tat Tai Tam*. Often, the dancer acquires her full height in the course of executing these *adavus* which call for the maintenance of the bent position of one knee and the extension or straightening of the other leg. All the *adavus* in the *Tattu* and *Nattu* variety suffer from an impression of lack of balance on account of this major elementary error of not holding one part of the body static while executing movements by the other. It was not without purpose

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that the traditional masters made dancers rigorously practice the first variety of *Tatta adavus* for a year before passing on to any leg extensions.

What is true of the *adavus* requiring leg extensions is almost true of the *adavus* which use toe-heel movement in the *Aradhamandali* position. Here also a common error relates to the change of level and height which frequently occurs in the execution of the *adavus* of the *Tattu Mittu* variety. Many dancers have begun to do the toe-heel movement without maintaining the lower level of the essential *Ardhamandali* position with knees outward bent and legs flexed. Another error in the varieties of *Tat Tai Tam* is a bend in the knee during leg extensions.

These bends in knee would not occur if dancers are made to go through rigorous exercises, some preferably at the bar. These errors of the lower limbs are reinforced by exaggerated movements of the shoulders, of the torso and above all by the use of the hip in sequences where the dancer is expected to move backwards. Except in some rare portions of *abhinaya,* in Bharatanatyam the use of the hip is forbidden. This dance style today has acquired a glamorous character by an erroneous use of the hip in acquiring what is commonly identified as a sculpturesque pose. Often these poses are wrong following neither the principles of movement enunciated in *Natyasastra* or *Silpsastra.* The *Sundari* neck, i.e., the lateral movement of the neck which is a movement of the atlas is also often marked by an undue overstatement. To this exaggerated movement of the neck, if there is the addition of the fluttering of the eye-lids and other uses of the eye-balls, the picture of a vivacious Bharatanatyam dancer without serious austerity is complete.

The feet contact, the knee position, the manipulation of the ball and socket joint of the pelvis and the deflection of the pelvis from the waist line or the *Katisutra,* the use of the torso either in two sections, the lower and upper trunk, or as a single unit, the total use of the shoulder or a limited use of the clavicle or the manipulation of the scapula and the articulation of shoulder joint, the use of the elbows and the neck are vital in any style of classical dance of India. Alas, little or no heed is paid to fundamental postures, manipulation of joints and control over muscles. It is often believed that if a dancer completes the *Tala* cycle and synchronizes a 'pose' with *Sama,* her work is commendable. This is far from the truth. The test of dancer lies in her control over anatomical or muscular structure of how much stress, accent, unaccent, briskness, abruptness or continuity she can bring to each sub-division of the *Tala* pattern which she executes with her feet, upper, and lower limbs. A careful watching of the manner

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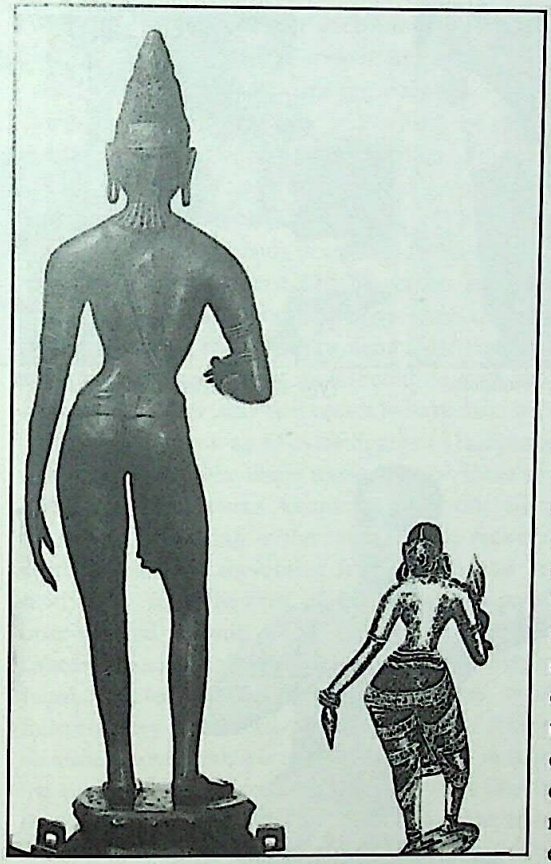

Left: Bronze Parvati; note treatment of spine.
Right: Drawing of bronze Parvati; note treatment of torso.

of execution of any of the *Jatis*, the *Tiramanas* of Bharatanatyam, the *Tukras* and the *Paranas* of Kathak, the various *Parengs* of Manupuri, the *Arasa* of Odissi, and the *Kalasama* of Kathakali will convince an observer of the great power of expression of the feet by controlling weight and mass and the quality of the foot-contact, it's calculated lightness or emphasis. These aspects were imbibed in a traditional method of training through continuous repetition and correction: today a self-conscious awareness of the function of each part of the human body and its exact role in an unit of movement should be an essential pre-requisite of a good dancer.

In Manipuri also, the feet position and the knee position are of fundamental importance. The ball of the foot is used delicately and lightly and the knees are just a little bent in front, The breaking of the lower limbs into two sections is so slight that it only gives the impression of a vague curve and not of two sections moving on a hinge. This manipulation of the knees in a manner in which the weight shifts from the ball of the foot to the entire foot in closed positions is responsible for the particular character of Manipuri. Any dancer who has not been able to control an unbroken movement of the shift of weight from the ball of the foot to the full foot or the heel gives an impression of jerks (in Manipuri Dance) as opposed to waves.

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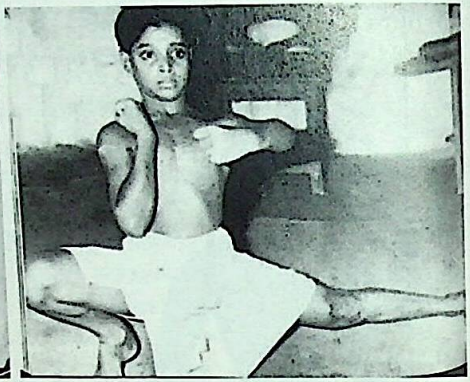
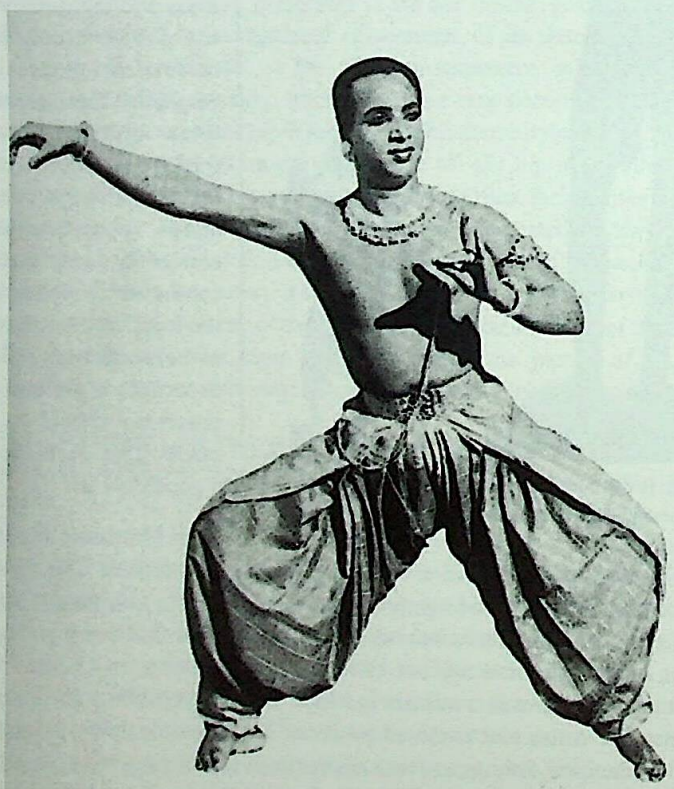
Training in Kathakali: teaching of mudras.



Typical leg extension of Kathakali.



Fundamental position of Kathakali, Chattunni Pannickar

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When a dancer is unable to get control over the exact placement of the foot and its subsequent shift of weight, she or he finds an easy way out by using 'dips' of knees. Manipuri dancing becomes vague and messy only when this fundamental control is lost and when the torso is used in any odd manner without reference to the vertical median of the body and without reference to the maintenance of an erect position of the pelvis, a relaxed position of the torso and a slightly flexed position of the legs, with knees which are slightly bent forward. The upper part of the body in this style is broken up into two portions, the upper chest and the lower waist. The movement emerges from the lower waist and is followed by the upper torso or vice versa, but it is an unbroken continuous curve in space resembling a figure of eight. Very few dancers today are executing this movement as it should be, with the result that either Manipuri dancing becomes stiff or it ceases to have form because it is so vague, sugary and circular. A clear motif of the figure of 8 is repeated whether it is in the hand movements or in the finger movement or torso or while covering in air or executing floor patterns. A common error with regard to the hand movement of the Manipuri dancing is the taking of the entire palms inwards, whereas the correct Manipuri movement is a semi-circular movement with its primary motivation from the wrist of supination and pronation rather than a gradual opening and closing of the fingers of the *ala padma hands.* In training of dancers especially outside Manipur, one frequently notices an excessive use of facial muscles and unnecessary movements of the head. The head merely follows a very slight semi-circular or figure of 8 movement of the neck, but has no initial movement; it is only a follow-up of neck movement beginning with the cervicles. With a seeming placidity of the face and with the combination of the movement of the neck, the lower and upper torso and erect pelvis and the slight frontal flexed position of the knees with weight slightly placed on the ball of the foot, Manipuri gives the impression of a continuous curve with a beginning and end. In *Upali* and *Longali,* as also in the portion relating to the *Bhangi Pareng,* this continuity of movement is essential.

Except for a few traditional masters, one does not see today any good Manipuri dancer execute the movement in air or in space (in male dancing) which used to be so characteristic of this dance style. In order to acquire an ability to execute these patterns in the air, either with one foot or with both the feet or knees, the dancer was required to go through a rigorous training of executing these patterns with hands or feet on the floor. The traditional masters, such as Guru Amubi Singh, made the pupils execute these patterns on mud before they were done in space. This aspect of Manipuri dancing, has practically disappeared from the

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Basic movements of Bharatanatyam.
Left Column: (a) Triangular effect –Tai-ha-tai; b) crossed leg position; (c) kunchita;
Right Column: (d) Shooting the arrow; (e) tat-tai-taam; (f) tai-yum-datta.

technical vocabulary and the style is the poorer for it.

A common error in Odissi emerges from a misunderstanding of the *Tribhanga* and the role played by the *Kati*. Dancers have begun to feel that the charm of Odissi lies in the use of the hip and the *Kati*. In fact the *Tribhanga* position so characteristic of Odissi dance and of Orissan sculpture is a basic position and not a movement. The posture emerges as a result of the shift of weight from one foot to the other in a closed demi-plie position, but during the course of the movement the hip is not used. The foot and hip that holds the weight remain static as in Bharatanatyam. In fact, a movement of the lower torso and the waist (*Parsva*) is essential for sequences, such as *Ta Jham Tari Jham* and the sequences of the *Parsva Mardala* and the *Kari Hasta* positions rather than a hip movement. Also a common error with regard to Odissi is an inability of the dancer to hold a strong taut lower limb position and a relaxed

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upper torso position. When the whole body is taut, the dance style begins to resemble Bharatanatyam, if the dancer is too relaxed or the knees are not sufficiently bent outwards it becomes bad Kathak. If the torso is used with excessive fluidity it is bad *Manipuri*. An even more common error in *Odissi* today is the incorrect use of the neck. Often only the Bharatanatyam *Sundari* neck is being used by dancers. While the *Sundari* neck is used in *Odissi* occasionally, the normal movement in most of these sequences and the *Arsas* is a movement which is motivated by the face and where the chin takes the lead with the head following. If the dancers were to think in terms of the chin leading then simple neck bends would be ruled out. However, many a time one sees dancers bending their neck or shifting their head side to side, but seldom does one see the execution of a perfect semi-circular or quarter-circle pattern of the chin and neck. Another movement in Odissi which is incorrectly done is the movement of a brisk back walk on the heels (*goithi*). This movement beautifully executed can capture a whole audience and badly executed it seems ridiculous. One of the secrets of the Odissi dancing is the capacity of the dancer to change levels gradually unobtrusively and yet definitely. This is a totally different principle from the Bharatanatyam principle of maintaining the level at the Ardhamandali position.

Balasaraswati in the fundamental position of Bharatanatyam

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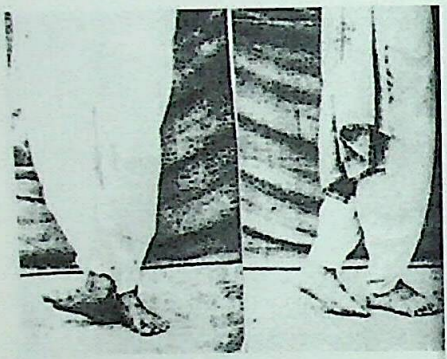
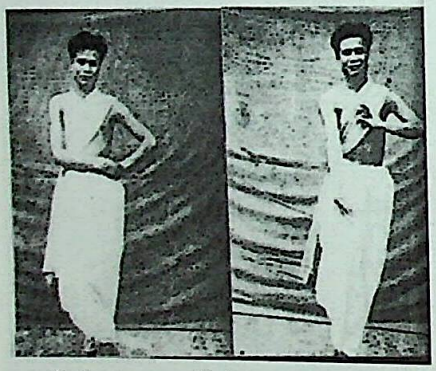


Basic positions of the feet in Manipuri



Body stance and balance in Manipuri

The late guru, Mahabir Singh in Manipuri

This change of levels is characteristic of the *Nrtta* technique, except in sequences which emerge from the *Chauk* where the dancer covers space as if drawing a circumference with a compass at the same level. Dancers often make a mistake of changing levels when executing a pirouette in *Chauk* and of not shifting levels when coming to the end of an *Arasa* or of another *Nrtta* sequence where a *Bhangi* or a *Tribhangi* has to be used specially in the slow tempo movement.

No one ever discusses positions or postures in Kathak. Kathak is supposed to be a quick execution of the rhythmical and metrical patterns, the faster the tempo, the quicker and more numerous the pirouettes the more impressive is the dancer. However, even in this style there is a subtle shift of weight, correct

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posture and the ability to manipulate accent, acceleration and retardation which distinguished good dancer from a bad one. The importance of maintaining one uniform height and level is gradually being lost also in this style. In the *Thata* portion one often sees dancers rotating shoulders, changing clavicle lines, bending knees unnecessarily and using eye lids and eyebrows, when all that is required is to shift the *Drishti* from the front to a little sideways (*Sachi*). Another common error in Kathak dancers is with regard to pirouettes or *Chakkars* which are executed by a quick stamp of one foot and then lifting of this foot high. While such *Chakkars* are now unknown in the repertoire of Kathak dancing, it would be of interest for people to know that Achhan Maharaj used to hit at the ankles of pupils specially girl pupils, if they were to lift their foot higher than six inches. Today feet are lifted to any height at any angle and the finale is left handing in the air. While this may have a dramatic effect, it once again takes away from the austerity of the style. The same is true of the movements of the upper limbs, wherein instead of the simple opening and closing (i.e. flexion and extension of biceps and triceps) at the shoulder level there is a great deal of flourish of the hands and fingers above the head and below the waist level. Many unnecessary movements are also introduced while executing the *Chakkars*. An unpardonable mistake on the part of any Kathak dancer would be to use the hip while executing the *Tatakara*. This unpardonable act is today

The late guru, Shambhu Maharaj in Kathak

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seen frequently on the stage and many gimmicks are used in order to draw the attention of the audience, through the feat of *javab* and *savala*.

Perhaps it is not relevant to talk of the expression on the face of the Kathak dancer while executing all these movements; nonetheless the expression of the dancer is of prime importance in all styles (more particularly Odissi, Kathak, i.e., those that primarily deal with what may be termed as the *Sringara Rasa*). The expression determines the nature of communication which is established with the audience. A too severe face, an over coquettish expression can ruin a concert. Other parts of the body play an equally important role in establishing the dancer as austere, or flippant, classical, or popular. While it is not possible to verbalise on subtle aspects effectively, it is hoped that even these pointers will convince performers and teachers of the great need for analysing movement bit-by-bit in order to understand the emotive quality of each of the anatomical units of the body and the purposes which the muscular system can serve.

In dance, the human body becomes an abstract impersonal instrument, through which feelings can be expressed. The instrument cannot communicate it, if it is not well maintained and one which is usually out of tune either because it is unshapely or unwieldy or it does not have the correct proportions at the right places. The instrument can prove faulty by a habitual misuse of it through wrong practice or lack of vigilance. As in the case of a musical instrument, although a composition can certainly be played through an instrument which has not been properly tuned, the particular *raga* will become meaningless. Likewise in dance the most wonderful of compositions can become mushy without the proverbial *angasuddham*. An understanding of the use of each of the limbs and their motive capacity is essential in a teaching process where time is being cut short. Unless this self-conscious awareness of break down and analysis is inculcated in the dancer and the audience is trained or initiated into having a set of perceiving eyes, one fears that soon, all too soon, the dance styles of India would perhaps once again become Nauch dances which had to be retrieved to their pristine beauty by some pioneers 30 years ago.

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Gita-Govinda and the Artistic Traditions of India

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

This paper is a rough outline of the vast store-house of source-material available in different parts of India and an attempt to map the movements which were sparked off in time and space through a period of roughly 605-700 years after the writing of *Gita-Govinda.*

It is recognized by all historians of Indian Sanskrit literature, the plastic and the performing arts that next only to the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata,* the *Gita-Govinda* holds a unique position in the history of the growth and development of the Indian Arts in the medieval period.

Our aim in identifying the source-material and mapping the routes of the travel of this short but all-powerful poetic composition is three fold:

(i) to establish a rough chronology of the spread of this work from East to the West and, East to the North and South of India. The chronology itself will throw, it is hoped, considerable light on the mobility of art-genres and forms in different parts of India and will show us how, in spite of political unrest and powerful divisive forces, India was culturally moving on one wave-length in the period 13th to 18th or even 19th centuries. In the performing art it continues upto the present day.

(ii) to show how the *Gita-Govinda* had permeated all levels of society and was not restricted to an intellectual or social elite. We find, in many parts of India, that the *Gita-Govinda* was used for the highest esoteric ritual; as also for the most popular entertainment at the village-level where the popular ballad-singer sang and danced the *Gita-Govinda* to the unfolding of the scroll, the Pat in Odisha or when the *jadupatuas* recited or sang it in Bengal.

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(iii) to attempt a comparative study of the interpretation-impact of the *Gita-Govinda* in different art-forms in India, ranging from the writing of the commentaries on the *Gita-Govinda* to the creative works modelled on the *Gita-Govinda* in different Indian languages, to miniature-painting and illustrated manuscripts, to manuals and theoretical works on music and dance and finally actual compositions of music and dance. This comparative study it is hoped will once again prove the inter-dependence not only of the different regions of India, and the mobility at different levels but also the inter-dependence and inter-connectedness of different art-forms in the Indian aesthetical tradition.

We may begin with a brief description of the historical and cultural situation immediately prior to the writing of the *Gita-Govinda.* The *Gita-Govinda* was written at a time when the epics had long been known and had deeply influenced religious aesthetic activity. The major works of Sanskrit literature, of Bhasa, Kalidasa, Bana and Harsha had already been created. The *Sangita-nataka* had come to stay. *Jatras* were popular. By the 12th century many major architectural and sculptural schools had been established and had, it would appear, begun to decline. All of the Gupta art had been created, the cave-temples and rock-cut structures of Mahabalipuram, Elephanta, Ellora, had been made. Most of the temples of the Orissian School had been created; Khajuraho had been erected, not to speak of the earlier movements. The cohesiveness provided by the Sanskrit language to the cultural history of India was beginning to weaken. The Apabhramsa and Prakrit forms had already begun to take their place. In the *Sastra,* the earlier traditions of the *Natyasastra* and even of the commentators were beginning to undergo transformation. Although the writers continued to name Bharata as the originator and creator, they were taking cognisance of the several regional or local styles which were prevalent. Sastraic sanction was given to the popular practice by the introduction of the concept of the *desi* in all art-forms. On the purely historical level, the great empires began to show signs of weakening and many new and small principalities emerged. The Muslim invasions had left their marks on the western and northern frontiers, and were beginning to affect the social and cultural life in other parts of India.

The Krishna-theme itself was undergoing a gradual change and transformation. The Krishna of the *Mahabharata* and even the *Harivamsa* had given place to the Krishna of the *Bhagavata purana.* Between the 10th and 12th centuries even the Krishna of the *Bhagavata Purana* was undergoing a change by the gradual shift of emphasis from the hero and prince, to the cowherd-lover supreme. In religion, although both the *Saivaite* and *Vaishnavite* cults prevailed, the influence of Ramanuja had spread far and wide. The Tamil saint-poets had

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become popular and the *Divyaprabandham* of the Alwars and the life and work of Andal had travelled to other regions of India. In Bengal the *Nibaddha sangita* was prevalent. The religio-musical patterns were called *gita* or *Prabandha.* A few centuries prior to the writing of the *Gita-Govinda,* the *Charyapadas* or *Charyagitis* were in vogue in Bengal. The composers of these mystic songs were the Siddha-charyas mostly of the *Sahajiya Buddhism.* The most important amongst the writers of *Charya Gita* was Bhanudatta of Bengal.

Way off in Kashmir, Kshemendra had written his poem *Dasavatara* and had also mentioned for the first time *Radha* as a distinct character. This very rough and ready historical literary and artistic background is necessary for a proper understanding of the reasons which contributed to the creation of the *Gita-Govinda* and the unique part played by the *Gita-Govinda* in once asserting through a rare genius the integrating power of poetic word through a fresh creative treatment.

It will be evident from the above that the Indian traditions, religious and artistic, had undergone many significant changes during the two or more centuries preceding the writing of the *Gita-Govinda.* It will also be obvious that although the earlier traditions of *Itihasa* and *Kavya* had waned, new forms were taking roots. Jayadeva drew upon all these consciously or otherwise created a work which crystallised these new movements and in turn provided a leadership and example for others to follow.

Soon after the writing of the *Gita-Govinda,* some time between 1158-1205 A.D. (according to some scholars he lived between 1158-1178 in the reign of Yallala Sena and according to others, between 1178-1205A.D. in the reign of Lakshmana Sena; the latter seems more plausible), many writers from different parts of India were deeply moved by the poem. Its impact can be judged from the fact that commentaries on the *Gita-Govinda* began to be written in all parts of India. Considering the limitations of modes of transportation and the seeming lack of communication it is amazing that already by the 13th century the work had reached Kerala from Orissa, as is borne out by the fact that *Gita-Govinda* was popular in the reign of Ravi Varma, who flourished in the 13th century A.D. The rulers of Venad and the Zamorin of Kozhikode who followed Ravi Varma instituted the recital of the *Ashtapadis* during worship in the temples and by the 14th and 15th centuries the *Gita-Govinda* and its musical and rhythmic structure had succeeded in transforming the music of the region. Between 1300-1340 the *Gita-Govinda* must have exerted enough influence in

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literary circles for Visvanatha, the writer of the *Sahityadarpana*, to quote and analyse the tenth Parichheda, Unmilanmadhugandha etc. In spite of this pervasive impact the first most serious and analytical attention to the text was given by Maharana Kumbha of Rajasthan (1433-1468) in his *Sangitaraja* and more specifically in his *Rasikapriya* commentary on the *Gita-Govinda*. Indeed judging from fact that the *Ragas* and *Talas* of the original *Gita-Govinda* have already been altered by Rana Kumbha it would appear that in the period intervening between the writing of the *Gita-Govinda* and the *Rasikapriya* the poetic composition must have already been handled and treated by many musicians and dancers with considerable flexibility in rendering and interpretation through the musical mode. Second only to the musical commentry *Rasikapriya* is the popular literary commentary or *Tippanika* of Mananka, possibly of the 13th-14th centuries. There is some difference of opinion amongst scholars about the region from which Mananka may have come, but it is generally agreed he belonged either to western India or Bengal.

In the sixteenth century followed many commentaries on *Gita-Govinda* as also literary works based on the *Gita-Govinda* besides, innumerable regional works began to refer to the *Gita-Govinda* of Jayadeva as a classic.

The *Bhaktamela* of Nabhaji, a contemporary of Akbar, refers to Jayadeva as an "incarnation and treasury of melody". So do many others. The internal evidence provided by these works of the south, west, and north clearly shows that the *Gita-Govinda* had already established a very important position in the literary cultural history of all parts of India. Contemporaneous with analytical literature was the growth of many literary genres, particularly the *Kirtana* in Bengal, which drew heavily upon the *Gita-Govinda*. The most important musical composition in Bengal after Jayadeva is the *Srikrishna Kirtana* of Vadu Chandidasa and the verses of Vidyapati from Mithila. The two Vaishnava poet-musicians gradually evolved a form known as the *Krishna Kirtanam* (1420 A.D. or so). The compositions closely followed the structure of the *Gita-Govinda* and particular *ragas* and *talas* were ascribed to each song. The *Krishna Kirtana* in its turn paved the way for the evolution of the *Nama Kirtana*, introduced in Bengal by the great saint poet Chaitnayadeva. In the sixteenth century Chandidasa and Vidyapati were followed by Thakur Narottama Dasa who was the founder of the Padavali *Kirtana*; he introduced the novel course of employing the slow tempo of the style of classical *dhruvapada* music of northern music to the *padas*. *Padavali Kirtana* was followed by many other styles, such as *Manoharshahi, Revati, Mandarini,* and *Jharkhandi,* all of which continued to adapt the *Rddha-Krishna-tattva* of *Gita-Govinda*.

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Alongside was another important development in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. Ananda Tirtha, the great exponent of *Dvaita siddhanta,* had travelled from Benares to Orissa through Vangadesa. He undoubtedly came across the recitation of the *Gita-Govinda.* In Orissa, he deeply influenced and finally converted two great scholars, namely Sobhana Pati and Syam Sastri, who later came to be known as Padamnabha Tirtha and Narahari Tirtha respectively.

After the death of Vira Narsimhadeva I, and during the reign of the King Bhanudeva I (who was a minor), Narahari Tirtha was sent to look after Srikakulam in the Krishna district in Andhra Pradesh. Narahari Tirtha ultimately became responsible for the propagation of Krishna cult in Andhra and for the introduction of the *Gita-Govinda* in temples. Gopala Krishna Bharati followed his footsteps and composed the work, the *Gopalakrishna vritti.* The influence permeated in other parts of South India, Karnataka and Tamilnadu and back again to Kerala where it had reached much earlier. The saint-poets including Purandaradasa, Tallapaka Annamacharya, (in Telugu) and others also followed the model of the *Gita-Govinda.*

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was a further development of interest in the *Gita-Govinda.* The two most important commentators of the music of *Gita-Govinda* are Chandradatta, the writer of *Bhaktamela* (mid-17th century A.D.) and Kavi of Mithila, the writer of the *Raga-tarangini* (1670-1705). Both allude copiously to the *Gita-Govinda* and analyse many of its verses. The tradition of the *Gita-Govinda* seems to be so popular by the time of Locana (1670-1705) that he refers to particular verses as *Suprasiddha* (famous) and does not consider it necessary to refer to the particular verse. Other works of the seventeenth century, particularly the *Hridayakautaka* of Hridayanarayana deva (1666 A.D.), continue to discuss and analyse the *Gita-Govinda.* Creative works modelled on the *Gita-Govinda* seem to find a new impetus in the South.

Siddhendra Yogi, the author of the *Bhama Kalapam* and *Golla Kalapam,* composed his work on the basis of the *Gita-Govinda* (1350-1450 A. D.) and was in direct line of development from where Narhari Tirtha had left off in Srikakulam. The village of Kuchipudi was only six miles from this centre of Krishna Bhakti. Many others' works followed in the line of *Bhama Kalapam.* Manaveda of Kozhikode in Kerala also wrote the *Krishnattam* play based on the *Gita-Govinda* in the 17th century (1654 A.D.). The tradition of singing of the *Gita-Govinda* was introduced on a regular basis in the 17th century and continues in the Guruvayoor temple. The saint-poets including Kshetrajna, Subramanya Kavi, Marimutta Pillai, Kavi Kunjara Bharati, Tyagaraja, Dikshitar and Swati

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Tirunal, all continued to be inspired by the *Gita-Govinda* and followed the principle of the free *pada.*

In Bengal, Orissa and Assam, the tradition continued, and the history of the prevalence of the poem and the inspiration it provided to kings, nobles, the common-man and the poor alike is too well-known to be recounted. To Manipur, as is well known, *Gita- Govinda* was introduced by the saint-king Bhagya Chandra Maharaj in the 18th century. Rajarishi Bhagya Chandra Maharaj was deeply influenced by Thakur Narottamdas and the style of *Padavali Kirtana* in composing his *Rasa* dances he used *padas* of the *Gita-Govinda* and also wrote on the pattern of the *Gita-Govinda.* The singing of the *Dasavatara* in the Sri Govinda temple and the singing of *Gita-Govinda* padas in the *Vasanta, Kunja* and *Maharasa* continues to this day.

The singing of *Gita-Govinda* was introduced by Narasimha Deva II of Orissa in the 13th century. From here it travelled to every hut and hamlet through the interpretation of the Poem in Oriya by the devotee-poet Jagannath Das. His *Gopala-lila* was recited in every nook and corner. *Basanta Rasa* was also a faithful rendering of *Gita-Govinda* in Oriya by Pindik Srichandan in the 16th century. *Jatras* incorporated in *Rasa-kallola* by Dinakrishna Das are also important for an understanding of the *Gita-Govinda* in the 16th century. Many works such as *Mathura-mangal* by Chandradasa, *Rahasya-manjari* by Debudurlav Das, *Bidagadha-chintamani* by Abhimanyu Samanta and *Rukmini-vilasa* by Jadumani Mahapatra followed.

In Northern and Western India, the poem had an equal sway from the 14th century to the 18th century. In the Western India Bilvamangal wrote his *Balagopala Stuti*, Namadeva his *Rasakrida* (1596-1618) and Vaman Pandit his *Radhavilasa* (in Maharashtra). In Western India and North India, the earlier fervour of the Bhakti school of Mirabai, of Vallabhacharya (born 1478 A.D.) gave rise to the writers of the *Ashtachap* school, all of the sixteenth century. Amongst these, the most important were the works of Surdas, Krishnadas, Parmanandadas and Kumbhandasa. Surdas particularly took the thirty-six traditional modes of Indian music, the *Ragas* and *Raginis* and, appended each to a love-poem on Krishna. Surdas was followed by Keshava Das of Orchha (1580 A.D.), Govindadas (1590 A.D.), Bihari Lal (1650 A..D.), and Kalidas (1700 A.D.), all poets in whom the Bhakti Rasa and the spirit of Ornamentation (*Riti*-poetry) combined.

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Of these Bihari's *Sat Sai* in which he celebrated Krishna's romance in a hundred verses is the most important. By the 17th-18th centuries A.D. we find that the same *Gita-Govinda* which had sparked off the ecstatic mood in the earlier works sparks off the preoccupation with the romantic ornateness. The character, the theme and the musical composition underwent a definite change and transformation.

Commentaries, creative works of literature and music abound in every region until the beginning of the 20th century. Our brief survey could be multiplied a hundredfold to show that the single work of limited length had unlimited power of guiding and directing the creative energies of a country for nearly six hundred years and more.

This picture in the literary world has to be supplemented with an equally rich and rewarding picture in the world of colour and line between the 14th and 19th centuries. In all parts of India the *Gita-Govinda* provided the stimulus for illustrating on book scrolls and miniature painting verses of the *Gita-Govinda.* Our first examples come from Western India nearly 250 years after the writing of the *Gita-Govinda.* In 1450 one version of the *Govinda* and two of the *Balagopala Stuti,* were produced in Western India (M. R. Majumdar, Gujarati School of Painting, *Journal of the I. S. of Oriental Art.* 1942 Vol. X. Pts. 3 and 4). All three follow the peculiar Jain style with its characteristic angularity dividing space into neat rectangles. The Krishna-theme particularly the *Bhagavata Purana* and the *Gita-Govinda* do not seem to appear again until the 16th century. The first among these is a *Gita-Govinda* series from Orissa dated 1550 A.D. This time they appear in Rajasthan area in the collections of Maharaja of Jaipur and Jodhpur respectively. The first two are dated 1598 and the third on the *Gita-Govinda* in 1610 A.D. Contemporaneous with these is a *Gita-Govinda* series from Eastern U.P. (Jaunpur) now in the collections of the Prince of Wales Museum dated1590 (Motichandra, *Jain Miniature Paintings from Western India*, Ahmedabad, 1949. Figs. 99-105). As part of the Appendix the Razmanamah (abridgment of *Mahabharata*) is a series illustrating the *Harivamsa* (1588 A.D.)

A full illustration of the *Gita-Govinda* appears in 1615 A.D. in an illustrated manuscript of the work (K. Khandalwala, *Art of India and Pakistan,* pl. 88). Moghul painters continued to be fascinated by the *Gita-Govinda* and the *Bhagavata Purana* for we find other examples of these, particularly those in the Bikaner collections (1615-1630 A.D.). The *Gita-Govinda* continued to be popular with the painters of Rajasthan, Udaipur, Malwa and Bundi sub-styles in

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the 17th century. Although the *Bhagavata Purana* and Keshavadasa's *Rasikapriya* were more popular, we find an important series of the *Gita-Govinda* in Mewar style dated 1723 (now in Saraswati Bhandar, Udaipur). Most important pictorially are, however, the series of the *Gita-Govinda* miniature paintings and those of Basohli (1730) and Kangra 1780-1800. These are finally followed by a series of Kishengarh executed in 1820. The tradition continued over the centuries in Bengal, Orissa and Mithila, not so much in miniature paintings as in the pictorial depiction of the theme in mud walls, scrolls, and pots. An important manuscript comes from Orissa in the 18th century. It is this tradition which culminated in the depiction of the Krishna-theme including verses of the *Gita-Govinda* in the sculptural reliefs of the Vishnupur temple in Birbhum (the possible birth-place of Jayadeva) and in the Kalighat paintings of Bengal. Finally we must mention the *Gita-Govinda* illustrations of the Ceylonese poet-painter George Keyt. The *Gita-Govinda* had also a profound influence on the painting of the Nathadwara school, although the immediate connection of these paintings is with the poetry of Vallabhacharya and not Jayadeva.

The listing of sources, however sketchy, will undoubtedly make it clear that the *Gita-Govinda* was a major force in the traditions of India in the arts of literature, music and painting. Its history in dance has to be reconstructed from the works on music and from one rare manuscript of unknown date (possibly 15th century), the *Abhinaya Gita-Govinda,* now in the Saraswati Mahal Library, Tanjore. Although incomplete, the manuscript is of immense value for a reconstruction of techniques of interpreting the *Gita-Govinda* in *abhinaya.* Since music and dance are so closely interlinked, it is inconceivable that the poet-musicians were not conscious of the power of the poetic, musical word in rendering it through dance. In any case, the *Dasaavatara* was sung and, danced in temple-ritual in Orissa, in Nathadwara and in the temples of Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Assam and Manipur. It is not known when its singing began in Badrinath, but here too it is sung at the time of the *Arati.*

But all this is the external evidence of the permeating influence of the Gita-*Govinda*: it still does not tell us anything of the nature of the poetic composition, its literary qualities and its technical qualities which had the potential of being interpreted, copied and rendered into different styles at different levels of society and in different regions of India. For this we must return to the poem itself.

Our first task would thus be to undertake a fresh analysis of the text not so much from the point of view of its being or not being a pastoral poem as opined by some Western scholars or a *upa-rupaka* or a *drisya-kavya* or even as a

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poem adhering or deviating from the principles of the *prabandha* in relation to the *charya-gitis* which preceded it or as a form of *jatra* but, from the point of view of its formal technical qualities as an ideal written script which could be freely adapted and interpreted in the other arts. This analysis, it is hoped, will unfold the manner in which Jayadeva was using the aesthetic principles of the Indian tradition in a powerful creative manner. The inter-dependence and inter-relationship of the arts was inherent to the tradition; theorists and creators alike had asserted it and used it in classical period of Sanskrit literature. Jayadeva through his work re-asserts the poetic principle of multiple meaning on one level and the principle of an integrated vision of artistic form on the other. No wonder that this multi-dimensional stature gave it a unique place in Indian art throughout India. There was, ofcourse, the unifying spiritual factor.

Multiple meaning was a central artistic principle of the writers of *Kavya* in Sanskrit as in other great literatures of the world. However, while the allegory is in the movement of the entire work or verse in most other literatures, in Sanskrit (multiple meaning) for the word was inherent and self-consciously-used. Thus each acquires a series of meanings capable of evoking diverse resposes. On the level of form, the "poetic word" is often a technical term from another art helping the artist to interpret the word in gesture, music and the like. Kalidasa often uses the word *'Sucha' 'Sakha'* in his plays in this manner. The *Gita-Govinda* in this respect is in direct line with the writers of the *Kavya* of classical period.

While we cannot pause here to analyse in detail these literary qualities, a reading of the several commentaries on the *Gita-Govinda,* both literary and musical, will make it clear that the commentators were conscious of this multi-dimensional quality of the work. The narrative moves smoothly as a lyrical pastoral drama on one level and as highly erotic poetry on the other. Through and under both these is the constant reminder that it is not human natural love which is being talked about, instead something which is implicit and not explicit but which filters through as an unforgettable experience. It is this which gives the work its particular tone and flavour and what has been called the hall-mark of *Vaishnava* dedication, faith, *Bhakti,* mysticism, whatever you may call it. But the words are not only this, they are important in themselves as embodying the model of Sanskrit *alamkara* tradition illustrating the different types of *nayikas.* And yet they serve another purpose; word by word, phase by phase, verse by verse, a picture is conjured up of moods of nature in clour, line, movement and sound. The descriptive narrative is couched in such a perfect juxtaposition of words, sound and rhythm that the whole moves as an unparalleled composition of

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visual beauty which can be responded to either purely, aurally or visually, literally or suggestively and finally symbolically.

We have referred to the technical qualities of the verse which contributed in no small measure in creating this effect. Not the least of these was the nature of the verse and the inbuilt system of the *raga* and *tala*. The complete mastery of the artist over the sound value of the 'word' apart from its 'multiple meaning-potentiality'; may well account for its popularity in all regions for India, and the phenomenon of its being adapted by diverse regional traditions *in toto* and not in differing recensions, adaptations etc. It was either assimilated as it is or used as a model, but there is hardly a recensional or a regional variant of the poem. This is unlike the of the phenomena of the spread of Rama-theme which found many versions and recensions in different parts of India.

Jayadeva calls his work *Prabandha*, a musical composition. These *prabandhas* are also known as *ashtapadis*, because each has generally eight *padas* of verses. Of these the first two lines are known as *Dhruva* or the principal refrain to be repeated and the other as simply *padas*. Although on the whole Jayadeva follows the Sanskrit metrical patterns like *Dhruva, Gitis* and *Prabandha*, his stanzas are not circumscribed into the rigid walls of any particular *varna* or *matra vritta*. The single *matra* is the unit of the *matras* used in the *Ashtapadis* and these are manipulated to suit the *talas*. Literary historians have showered high praise on 'this quality of welding, meaning and sound, sound and rhythm in the work. All have commented on the successful use of alliteration and complex rhythms (Macdonell, Keith, S. K. De, etc.) However, none of these critics has commented on the skill of the poet in creating a visual picture of high imagination and transport through a self-conscious use not only of the conventions of Sanskrit poetry, metrical patterns, sound and *tala*-system, but also of the awareness of spatial pictures, colour-symbolism and movement-patterns. The metres no longer imprison musical form, instead they help to free the song in a manner that it flows with fresh spontaneity and rhythm. The 'conventions' cease to be 'conventions', the technical skill loses the wooden correctness and acquires a dynamic resilience. It was Jayadeva's use of the *Dvidhatu-prabandhas* in this masterly fashion which gave rise to the tradition of free verse in all parts of India. The *udgraha* and *dhruva* became the *charana* and *pallavi* of India.

The fluidity of the lines begun by Jayadeva also led to a freedom from metres in later poetry so that free verse was used on the principles of *yati*, *prasa* and *padagarbha-rachana* with in the *angas* of the *avarta*. It was with this free verse which was sometimes known as musical prose which gave rise to the

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Kirtana or *pada-sahitya* in the *Devaranama* songs of the Dasakuta composers in Karnataka.

In Bengal, Jayadeva's treatment of the *prabandha* had an equally remarkable effect. Although Jayadeva may have himself used the techniques of *charya giti* and *charya padas* of Bengal or the form of the *jatra,* he combined these dexterously with the *shadangas* of the *prabandha* (the four main divisions of *Udgraha, Melapaka, Dhruva* and *Abhoga-which* are also called *Arambha, Ghat- Parichaya* and *Nishpatti* respectively). The successors of Jayadeva began immediately to use this particular manner of treating the *prabandha* not following earlier models. The *prabandha* songs and devotional songs were deeply influenced by the structure of *Gita--Govinda* and ultimately gave rise to the whole tradition of *Sri krishna Kirtane* of Vadu Chandidasa and the *Padavali Kirtana* of Thakur Narottamdasa. It will be evident from the above that the later poet-musicians were indebted to Jayadeva not only for the ideas of Radha and Krishna but also for the form and technique of their composition. Like the *Prabandha,* the *Padavali Kirtana* contained all the *angas,* the *dhatu, tala, raga,* etc. and yet was capable of improvisation, innovation and multiple interpretation. The *padavali kirtana* follows the example of the *Gita-Govinda* closely in its division of the *Kirtana* to describe the different phases of the love of Krishna and Radha. The tradition goes on in Bengal for centuries under different Vaishnava Gosvamis and it continues until the 20th century. The history is rich and interesting and demands an independent study.

The Gita-Govinda not only inspired Siddhendra Yogi on the level of spirit, allegory and theme, but provided the verse-model for the composition of the *Bhama Kalapam.* The *Krishna Giti* of Manaveda of Kerala (13th century) similarly followed the metrical patterns and structure of the *Gita-Govinda*; indeed, it gave rise to a whole style of musical compositions known as the *Ashtapadiattam.* Thus we find that Jayadev's *Gita-Govinda* had the potential of influencing different poets and musicians on account of one central principle of handling the *prabandha-form* in a manner which would provide greater fluidity, flexibility and improvisation than the earlier compositions of the same type. Next only to the literary meaning and verse-time division, technical mastery was the integration of the *raga* and *tala* to the verse. Although this had been attempted earlier, Jayadeva made it into a central principle of a literary composition. At a time when Sanskrit theatre had begun to wane, the integration of word not only to its tonal sound value but to a whole system of *raga* and *tala* provided a fresh stimulus to the artistic stream. Immediately after Jayadeva,

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poets from all parts of India including the north, south, east and west began to compose poetry which was set to a particular *raga* and *tala*. Alongside the original continued to hold a spell over devotees and artists all over the country. This is obvious from the commentaries we have mentioned earlier, particularly that of Rana Kumbha in the 15th century. It is, however, also evident from Rana Kumbha's commentary that although the text had not undergone any transformation musicians and dancers had begun to interpret the *ashtapadis* in a variety of ways. There seemed to have grown up different *sampradayas* of Orissa, Bihar and Mithila and the southern region; little wonder that one of the aims Rana Kumbha sets out for himself is the standardisation of the *ragas* and *talas* of the *Gita-Govinda*. He prescribed new *ragas* and *talas* for the *ashtapadis;* he also composed special *prabandha-lakshana* for codifying the structural pattern of *Gita-Govinda*. He indicated the *svara*, i.e. the *svaramalika* intervening as separate units, *patas* i.e. *vadhyakshara* or conventional imitation of instrumental sounds and *tanas* that are auspicious or *Mangalika* prefixes like *Ta Na Na*. He also gave detailed instructions for the movement or *Dhatus*. Finally ornamentation was added through *alap* and *gamakalapa*. In short, between the 12th and 15th, centuries, the *Gita-Govinda* came to be an ideal script which musician found most suitable for rendering into a full and rounded musical composition, be it the *dhruvapada* variety of the *Padavali Kirtana* or the compositions of Rana Kumbha or those of the composers of South India. The *Ragas* and *Talas* used for singing of the *ashtapadis* in Kerala and Tamilnadu are mostly in agreement: they do not follow in the best part the *ragas talas* indicated by Rana Kumbha. According to the musicologists of the South "adaptability of the *Ashtapadis* for Karnataka music is amazing and they sound as if they had been originally composed in their present form." Indeed, a comparative study of the different regional varieties of rendering the *ashtapadis* would throw interesting light on the development of *ragas* and *talas* in the different regions of India. Each region seems to have a place for Jayadeva and believes that the *ashtapadis* were composed perhaps only for that region. Bengal, Manipur, and Assam as well make the same claim as the Karnataka musicians. *Gita-Govinda* rendered in the *Padavali Kirtana* style still prevalent in the *Rasa* and *Sankirtana* traditions of Manipur would make one believe that Jayadeva wrote for no other region than Manipur.

The singing of *Gita-Govinda* in Mathura and Brindaban is characteristic only to that region and so is the singing of the *Gita-Govinda* in the temples of Guruvayoor, Nathadwara, Jagannath and Badrinath. Instead of listing the different *ragas* and *talas* used in different regions of India we can play recordings of the

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same verses from different regions. The ear will be able to judge what words cannot describe (tape recordings of verses of the *Gita-Govinda* were played in the following order):

Recitation of the first verse by Balram Mishra from Mathura

Singing of GG	Guruvayoor temple
Dasavatara verse	Odissi style
Dasavatara verse	Karnatak music; Kuchipudi
Dasavatara verse	Manipuri Padavali Kirtana
'Srita Kamala'	North Indian Music
'Lalita lavanga lata'	Karnataka music, Padavali Kirtana
	Odissi- Manipuri
'Harirha mugdha-vadhu'	Pantuvarali-Adi Tala- Karnataka music
do	Manipuri
do	Thumri, North Indian Music
'Yahi Madhava Yahi Keshava'	Odissi, Mnipuri
'Pasyati disi disi'	Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Manipuri, Odissi
'Priye charuseele'	Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Manipuri, Odissi

The above was illustrated with *Abhinaya* to show the possibilities of diffe.ring interpretations in the different styles of Indian dance. The musical composition, the *raga* and *tala* and the range in *abhinaya* in rendering the same *ashtapadis* convince one of the capacity of multiple meaning of the word and the poetic line, the flexibility of the metrical patterns and sound value; of the words which allowed multiple interpretations in sound melody and rhythm. It will also make evident the fact that the principle of *Vyabhichari* and *Sanchari bhava* was used by Jayadeva to a point which gave the utmost freedom of improvisation and innovation. It is this quality of freedom within a disciplined framework which also allowed the tradition to sustain itself without becoming stagnant and static. The *Gita-Govinda* with its technical and artistic qualities is the most perfect example of fundamental principles of Indian aesthetics. It also shows how while each region evolved a distinctive character, there was an underlying unity and universality which once again transports us from the world of pure technical skill to the world of surcharged feeling.

An analysis of the pictorial illustrations of the *Gita-Govinda* reinforces our findings in the sphere of music and dance. Although the earlier painters from

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Western India are held captive in rigidity of the angularities of the Jain paintings, the spirit and form of the *Gita-Govinda* provides the same stimulus for freedom and fluidity as it does to the *Prabandha Kavya.* The Jaunpur illustrations from Eastern U.P. continue to be stiff but already appear to break away from the earlier rigidity. The Moghul illustrated manuscripts and the Mewar series are characteristic works of Moghul and Rajasthan miniatures and yet the feeling of *Gita-Govinda* comes through. The visual picture of space, line, colour and movement which the words of Jayadeva had conjured up are a definite help to the artist. Each region and each style takes these as the starting point, the spring-board and then interprets freely both on the level of understanding of the meaning and its translation into pictorial form. The division of the space in painting often follows the flow of the lines, or the spatial situation described in the verse. The artist breaks up his canvas into different zones to depict the *Sakhi,* and the phases of Krishna's love and yet how differently in ethos and in technique are these paintings from each other!

We will be able to observe this if we compare the rendering of the same *ashtapadi* in different styles. A comparative study of the pictorial depiction of the same verses in different schools of paintings will lead us to the same conclusions, as arrived at after hearing the different interpretations in music and dance. Here slides followed from the schools Western India, Jaunpur, Malwa and Basholi, Kangra and Krishnagarh.

Perhaps even this sampling will show one of the inter-dependence of the arts with the full capacity of attaining an autonomy of form and an individuality of style. This then is the second fundamental principle of Indian Art which manifests itself creatively in the rendering of the *Gita-Govinda.* We had said in the beginning that we shall try to outline a rough chronology of the spread of the *Gita-Govinda* to show how it had permeated all levels of society and how it had influenced and integrated all the arts. This paper, it is hoped, has given some indications of the first and the third; the second though alluded to could not be outlined here. Suffice it to say that the *Mahari* and the *Jadurpatua* alike, the Moghul Princess and the maidens of Basohli, were all spell-bound in the love and beauty embodied in the *Gita-Govinda.*

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Goddess and Women in Indian Myth and Art

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

"O Goddess who removest the sufferings of thy supplicants, be gracious!
Be gracious, O mother of the whole world
Be gracious O queen of the universe! Safeguard the universe!
Thou O Goddess art queen of all that is movable and immovable

Thou alone hast become the support of the world
Because thou dost subsist in the form of the earth!
By thee, who exist in the form of water, all
This universe is filled, O thou inviolable in thy valour

Thou art Vishnu's energy boundless in thy valour
Thou art the germ of the universe, thou art illusion sublime!
All this world has been bewitched, O goddesss
Thou indeed when attained, art the cause of
Final emancipation (moksa-release) from existence on the earth!

All sciences (learning-vidya) are portions of thee, O goddess
So are all women without exception in the world!
By thee, alone as mother this world has been filled
What praise can be there for thee?
Thou art beyond praise, the sublimest expression."

The is the prayer or praise which Indra the most powerful god of the Hindu pantheon along with *Agni* (God of Fire) offered to the goddess after she had slain all the demons (*asuras*) in a famous text called 'The Glorification of the Great Goddess' (Devi-Mahatmya). The praise comes after ten long chapters which

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describe the goddess's (*Devi's*) conflict against the twin demons called Madhu and Kaitabha (Psychic Man), the battle with the boar-buffalo demon called Mahisha (Vital Man), and the war against others called Sumbha and Nisumbha, Chanda and Munda, and Raktabija (Physical Man). The prayer of the gods is the culmination–of a series of mighty conflicts and not a romantic deification of the beautiful woman, who is helpless, innocent, to be rescued by knights. Similar hymns and invocatory verses can be found throughout Indian literature and examples can be multiplied hundred-fold. Serpent, tree, vegetative nymphs, river and earth are goddesses scattered throughout Indian art. Monuments, sculptural relief or painting, Buddhist, Jaina or Hindu give them a pride of place. They guard shrines, are the entrance to portals and are indispensable for any ritual or worship. They develop into mighty goddesses, or more powerful, than the Hindu gods and the celestials mortals pay them homage and are suppliant before them. They continue to be remembered in the annual cycle of the Indian calendar. The contemporary Indian calendar is interspersed with the festivities of spring revolving around Saraswati, the goddess of learning; the autumnal goddess Durga; the vanquisher of the powerful demons; the fierce Kali, the killer of all evil.

Myths revolving around nymphs, goddesses, courtesans, celestial and terrestial are woven into all literature and art. The corpus of Indian mythical and artistic traditions would be reduced to one third if these lovely alluring, powerful and benign women were excluded.

The mythical and imaginative of the collective psyche has however to be seen also against the other polarity of the texts and manual of law and social conduct (the Dharmasastras) where a seemingly different picture is presented. Manu's (the writer of the Code of Conduct) oft quoted statement appears to sum up the attitude.

"A woman should never be independent. As a daughter, she is under the surveillance of her father, as a wife, of her husband and as a widow, of her son". But the same Manu, while speaking of a house, says that "where a woman rules the home, the gods dwell", and later in the context of the role of a teacher, he states: "A master exceedeth ten tutors in claim to honour: the father a hundred masters, but the mother a thousand fathers in right to reverence and in the function of a teacher".

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This puzzling phenomenon of the exalted place of the woman in Indian myth, art and literature as the ever resplendant, ever beautiful, and the all-powerful in her aspects of equanimity and dynamic valour and the lack of legal and socio-economic status and equality has been the cause of innumerable statements on Indian women who have been an enigma to many.

Mother Goddess figure from Mohenjodaro 2000-1500 B.C.

Fertility figure- Bronze- Mohenjodaro- National Museum

What are the causes of this polarity or inconsistency in perspectives and attitudes? Does it reflect in an ambivalence which it has been said to have characterized the Indian mind in most spheres, or can we discern behind the seeming dichotomy a cohesive vision which manifests itself in a system of clearly differentiated categories at a different levels or planes of human existence.

Although the female principle and the mother goddess cult has been known to most ancient civilisations, it survives most potently in India from the Indus valley civilisation and the Harappan culture to the tribal and village deities of contemporary India, she plays a dominant role unlike the cult of Virgin Mary which declined early and the near extinction of the mother figure in Judaism and Islam.

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Before an attempt is made to resolve this puzzling phenomenon, a picture of a few goddesses, wives, daughters, courtesans, and scholars should be presented. Their bare enumeration may enable us to understand the dialectics of this world view and the significant place of the Indian woman in myth, art and literature.

We have already spoken of the mother goddess and her appearance in the Indus Valley Civilization. Whether travelling from Western Asia or belonging to the Pre-Aryan or Dravidian substratum of Indian civilization, she dominates the scene. She is seen as a fertility goddess in innumerable terracotta figurines and as a dancer in the famous bronze statuette, popularly called the dancing girl. She is both dancing girl and a fertility figure as she holds a bowl of grain in her hand. The cult of the mother goddess and fertility survives today in tribal and rural village India. No village is without its *gramadevi* (village deity) who protects the village. She is fecundity personified and is known by different names but essentially she symbolises fertility. Many trees, rivers and sea nymphs, and goddesses constitute the themes of the Vedic hymns, despite the fact that historians have stated that *Rigvedic* culture is perhaps the only major culture in which the mother goddess is conspicuously absent and that the Vedas reflect a patriarchal society.

While the mother goddess cult may be absent explicitly, it is not possible to ignore the importance of nymphs and goddesses who pervade the pantheon. From the *Rigveda* to the *Atharva veda* they appear in consistently changing roles assuming different manifestations, leading to the incontrovertible conclusion that possibly the mother goddess and the worship of the earth as goddess and life giver fused into one. The fertilizing waters and the sanctity of the earth have remained fundamental to the Indian world view for centuries. Its potency can be seen in contemporary India at the tribal, rural and sophisticated levels.

The earth and the waters constitute the basis of innumerable myths in Indian literature, ancient and medieval. It is this life-giving attribute which is invoked in the first two verses of the hymns quoted above. The two basic elements of natural phenomena give rise to a series of goddesses and heroines. More important amongst them are those who represent the earth, water, sky and energy principles of the Indian world view.

The *Rig veda* devotes an important section to *Prithvi sutra* (the Earth Hymn). While the Mother Earth retains many of the attributes and functions of the Earth Mother of the Ancient Near East, many more are added. She is *Prithvi* (earth), but is also *Aditi* (daughter of Sun), the mother of *Varuna* (water) and is the

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common womb of existence. She is 'what has been born and will be born', upon whose ground the citadels constructed by the gods unfold themselves, every region of her that is the womb of all this earth holds people of manifold varied speech, of different customs, she milks a thousand streams of wealth upon this earth, day and night join, black and bright unite; and she bestows brilliancy and strength and protects all.

Although the sky as father and earth as mother is a common feature of most ancient religions, in India the conception is overlaid with many other goddesses who continue to symbolize the earth. In the *Rig Veda,* the goddess *Prithvi* (Earth) one of the two parts constituting the physical world. She is mother (*Prithvi*) and the heavens or the sky is *Diva* (father) and jointly the two are *Dyava-Prithvi* (sky-earth).

The idea of the Earth's motion and its consequent incessant movement is reflected in the same *Veda* (R.V.VII-99) where it is stated that the solar *Visnu* supported the vault of the heaven and fixed her firmly. Later in the *Satapatah Brahmana* (S.B. II I. 8-10), the earth is likened to a lotus leaf which floats on the waters of existence. To the gods, *Prithvi* (Earth) is *Aditi,* the life and light giver. Later to the agriculturists and others, she is *Sita* the Earth principle of the epics.

In the *Aitareya Brahmana* the earth is identified with *Sri*: in some of the later *Upanishads* she is identified with *Lakshmi,* the goddess of harvest and fortune. In *Pauranic* literature, the earth has been frequently described as an aspect of the *Sakthi* (the all-pervading energy or the great mother). Ultimately, it is this earth goddess which assumes the resplendent form of *Durga,,* the most dominating goddess of contemporary India. She is the autumnal goddess representing the season of harvest and mellow fruitfulness and ripeness. She is the benign energy who vanquishes demons and evil forces, and she is the giver of food: *Annapurna.* In all her manifestations, she is the bounty whether of spring or of autumn, of knowledge or fortune. She is thus associated with honey in all her aspects and is conceived as the bee; because she is the depository of water, milk, and juice—in a word all that we would call life.

The earth goddess, and her various manifestations are closely linked with the conception of the eternal waters, and the vegetation which emerges from them. Saraswati is an aspect of the Earth goddess. She is also related to Durga, the autumn's spring manifestation. Primarily she is river goddess. In the *Vedas,* she is a sacred river and gradually she is personified as the river goddess closely

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Gajalakshmi- Goddess Lakshmi with elephants in attendance. Earth and its plenty.

associated with her well-known counterparts, the *Ganga* and the *Jamuna*. Ancient geography speaks of Saraswati as a river and undoubtedly the Ganga and the Jamuna are the two mighty rivers which flow through India but their significance in Indian myth goes far beyond their physical reality. The *Rig Veda* praises Saraswati as the best amongst the goddesses. In the next phase of her evolution, she is identified with *Vak* (speech). The Vedic seer invokes *Vak* (speech) as a goddess:

"When uttering words which no one comprehended
Vak, the queen of gods, the gladdener was seated
The heaven's four regions drew forth drink and vigour
Now whither hath her noblest portions vanished?
The Deities generated Vak the goddess,
animals of every figure speak her
May she, the gladdener yielding food and
vigour the Milch cow Vak approach us
Let us say Vrtta let us free the rivers
Let them flow loosed at the command of Indra

(R.V. Book VIII 89, 10-12).

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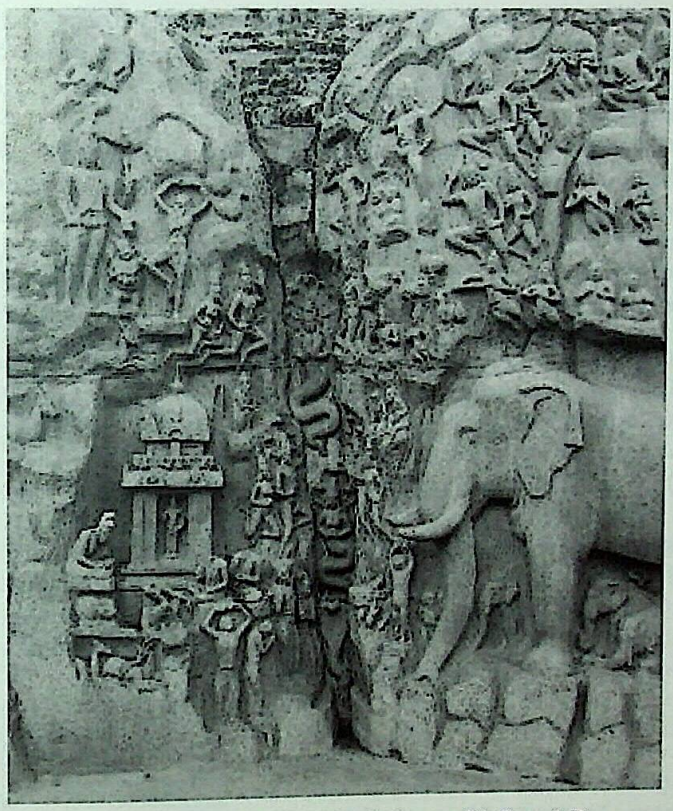

The descent of the Ganga. Mahabalipuram 7th Cent. A.D.

Later Vak and the river goddess Saraswati are fused into one, as the personification of learning. It is as the goddess of learning, *Vidya* that India and many other countries of Southeast Asia worship her. She is to the Indian, Logos the eternal knowledge, the supreme source of creativity and is associated in the vedas with two other goddesses namely *Ida* and *Bharati.* Saraswati is described as the snow-white goddess with garments and everything associated with her in white, denoting her purity including the white swan which is her vehicle. Indian literature, classical and medieval, is replete with hymns to this goddess of learning in her diverse manifestations. Indian sculpture and iconography depict her riding a swan, holding a veena (lute), a book and rosary, and countless images of her can be seen through a period of two thousand years.

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As significant is the assimilation of the myth of the Saraswati into the myth of the Ganga. The sacredness of the confluence of three rivers; Saraswati, Ganga and Jamuna, in Prayag (Allahabad) is well known; the three rivers merge into one another; in the related myths a transmutation takes place. However, in time to come the myth of the Ganga assumes a most important pivotal role in Indian civilization and culture. Ganga's relation to the serpents is basic. Each contains life-increasing powers of the water as a result we often find them together in myth and art. Sometimes the Ganga assumes a mermaid form and often Indian sculptural relief shows the lower half as mermaid and the upper as human and protected by a hood of snakes.

Mythically the *Ganga* is the holy water in the *Kamandala* (the water vessel) of Brahma which purified the world. She descends from the heavens from the foot of Vishnu as Trivikrama when he covered the universe with his three steps. But the Ganga is also the drop of water at the top of one of the matted locks (*jatas*) of Siva. It is this drop of water from the celestial heavens which fills the ocean (*sagara*). There is an interesting story of how when the gods (*devas*) and the demons (*asuras*) fought, the latter hid themselves in the ocean, the waters of which were inaccessible to the former (*devas*). At the request of the celestials, Agastya, the sage, proceeded towards the mighty ocean which he sipped in a trice. It was now easy for the celestials (*devas*) to conquer the demon (*asuras*) because the latter could no longer hide themselves.

However, for the welfare of the world and life to flow, it was essential that the ocean be filled again, and so the celestials prayed to Agastya once again to release the waters he had sipped. This was no longer possible as he had digested the waters. Finally, Brahma reassured the celestials that the ocean would be filled when Bhagiratha, another human, would bring Ganga down to the earth with his penance. Later Bhagiratha undergoes great penance with a view to ensure her descent to earth, without of course devastating the universe. Ganga agrees to descend from the heavens. But someone is needed to control the force of her dynamic descent–it is feared that she may devastate the earth, and Siva's aid is sought: he alone can harness the flow. It is thus that she becomes the drop in the matted locks of Siva. Indeed the matted locks of Siva are identified with the Ganga. The waters of the ocean rise to the heavens and flow again, but in rhythm.

The myth of the descent of the Ganga from the heavens constitutes the theme of countless sculptural reliefs and iconographical forms, the most outstanding amongst these being the famous relief in Mammallapuram in South India. Here

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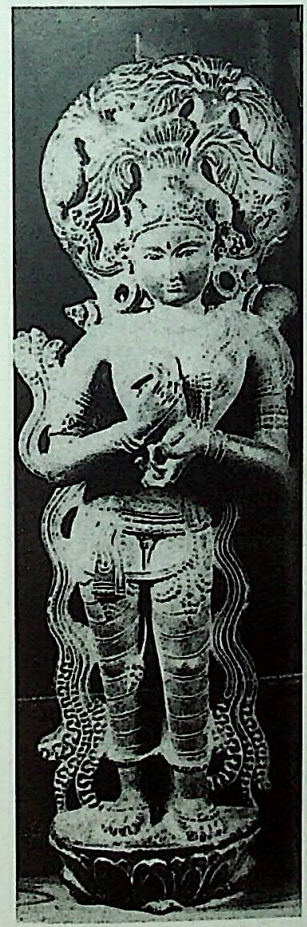
the penance of the human man Bhagiratha is an essential component of the myth: as penance and austerities alone can call forth the life giving water. In iconography, Ganga is often seen held in Siva's locks. She dances with him as his consort but is also his adornment. She is all this, but above all, she is the great purifier and the sustainer of all life. Naturally and logically, the Ganga is the entrance to temples. She is seen as the guardian of temples in door jambs of temples. Always the attitude of the goddess suggests abundant water and food and a harvest of splendid crops. Instead of emerging from the water vessel of Brahma, she herself carries the vessel brimming with water the *purnakumbha* (the full pitcher). Indeed the common motif of the *purnakumbha* is the symbol of this full brimming waters of life. No Indian ceremony is begun without the installation of this full-vessel (the *kumbha*).



Ganga–carrying water pitcher.
10th Cent. A.D. –
Bengal Medieval

Some scholars have compared the Mediterranean goddess Artemis and Ganga. Although both are acknowledged in heaven, on earth and in the underworld, the strongly matriarchal flavor of the Indian myth continues in India but gets obliterated in Greece and elsewhere. In fact the development of the myth in the two civilizations is a good indicator of the distinctive world views which evolved.

The confluence of the twin rivers Ganga and Jamuna has arrested the imagination of the Indian poet Kalidasa and the Gupta artist is fascinated by the co-mingling of the white stream of the Ganga and the blue streams of the Jamuna. There are magnificent sculptures depicting the theme. Elsewhere the two appear together as deities of shrines.

Volumes could be filled on the river goddesses of India, particularly Ganga who has been a physical and mythical presence in Indian literature and art unlike any of her counterparts in the world. In essence she symbolises the purifying waters

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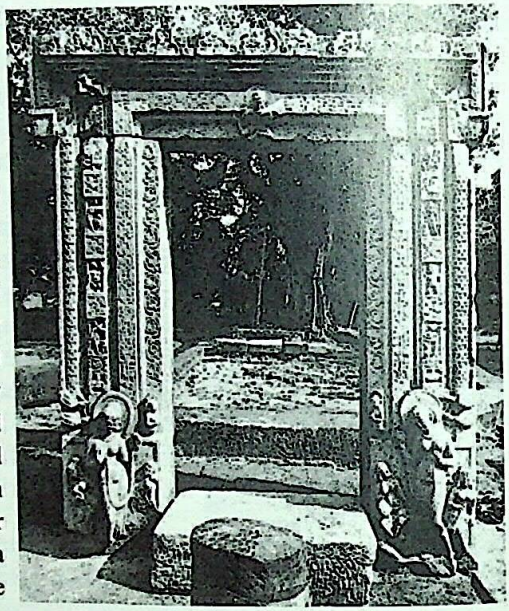

Ganga and Jamuna–as entrance figures.
Gupta-6th Cent. A.D.

of creation and is the source of all life. Earth and Water, the *Prithvi* and the *Ganga* remain basic to all conceptions of creation in the Indian world view. While earth and the waters *give* rise to the significant body of Indian myths all centering around goddesses, there are the other beautiful nymphs and celestial maidens of Indian mythology who have inspired poets and sculptors, musicians and dancers alike. They are both tree goddess and water goddess and are known by a variety of names–Yakshis, the Vrkshikas, the Sala bhanjikas. They appear in Indian art early and occupy every nook and corner of Indian sculpture whether sacred or profane. A common deduction made about them is that despite all their variety, they symbolise fertility in some form or the other. Tree worship also has been known to many cultures, but perhaps it does not assume as great a significance as in India.

Fergusson considers them as the pictorial representation of 'the primitive faiths of the casteless *Dasyus* (slaves) who inhabited northern India before the advent of the Aryans.' Vogel studies them as part of the *Naga* or serpent cult, Vincent Smith speaks of them as fertility goddesses, and Coomaraswamy wrote one of his earliest books on them and their male counterparts the *Yaksas.* They are seen in Indian art from the earliest Mauryan remains (2nd Century B.C.) to the medieval sculpture and painting. They are mentioned in classical Sanskrit literature and Kalidasa centres the plot of one play *Malavikagnimitra,* around the ceremony of the woman and the tree (the *asoka dohada* motif). The myth in all its diversity of manifestation is an excellent example of a purely functional aspect of life being transmuted into myth. The asoka tree is known for its medicinal value in curing certain feminine diseases. Its bark and flower is used in indigenous medicine even today. The tree is essential for the natural health and regularity of

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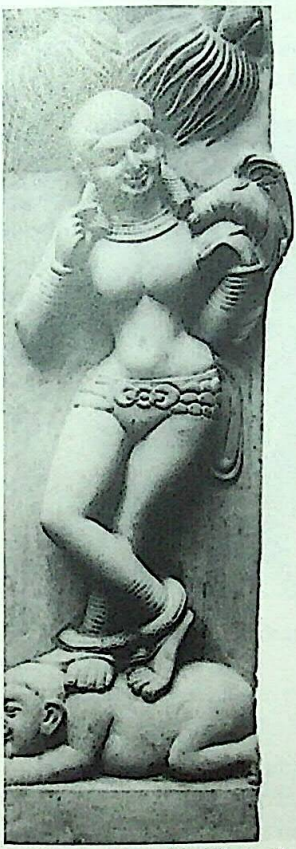

Woman, Vegetable, Bird and Animal–Mathura

the women's biological system. The myth inverts the functions and makes it into the woman's embrace being essential for the flowering of the tree: thus the word *Asoka dohada* or the generic work *Salabhanjika* (she who leans on the tree). In some parts of India, there continues still a periodic ritual where women embrace the tree and partake of its bark or flower.

The myth then enters literature, architecture and sculpture and becomes a dominant artistic motif. Viewers of Indian art will easily recall the outstanding example of the motif in Sanchi where she performs a purely architectural function as a diagonal bracket and is the symbol of the fullness of vegetation and life. She appears repeatedly in Indian art of all ages and regions as brackets or ceiling figures, isolated reliefs in conjunction with tree plants and animals. The medieval temples of Khajuraho, Bhuvanesvara, the temples of Mount Abu and Ranakapura are crowded with these figures on the outer walls and pillar or ceiling figures. While she is also the celestial beauty (Surasundari) and the dancer. In plastic form she is invariably in the attitude of dance and often holds musical instruments symbolizing the sound of music and harmony. She is seen in close proximity with animals or occasionally rides them. Nameless, she is the epitome of the inherent harmony of planet, animal and human life. She is the ecological balance between the natural and the human.The *Yaksi* is another manifestation of the goddess of the forest, the *Aranyani* of the vedas. The poet invokes her:

"Goddess of wild and forest who
seemest to vanish from sight,
.....
The goddess never slays unless some
murderous enemy approaches

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Now have I praised the Forest Queen,
sweet scented redolent of balm
The mother of all sylvan things, who tells
not but hath stores of food".

Earth, water, and tree provide the basis of three distinct types of goddesses and women in myth and art. The sky although the father is the atmosphere which sustains other goddesses. Predominant amongst the goddesses of the atmosphere is Dawn (*Ushas*) and her companion the night (*Ratri*). A famous hymn of the *Rig Veda* invokes Dawn; she is described as a dancer who appears on the stage and unveils herself. She is the provider of light and life. The verse runs:

Oh Ushas, nobly born
Bestow thou on us vast and glorious riches
Preserve us, evermore ye gods with blessings

(R.V. VI, 78,6)

and again
"The fire well kindled sings aloud to greet
her and with their hymns
the priests are chanting welcome
Ushas approaches in her splendour, driving
all evil darkness far away, the goddess

A complimentary theme is that of Ratri, the night. The night too is invoked as a goddess a *Devi* who is the daughter of the heavens above, who pervades the worlds, who protects all beings and gives them shelter. Later this night is explained as coming forth from the *Maya* (creative power) of Brahman. She is then called *Bhuvaneswari* (the sovereign power over the worlds). The poets invoke her as:-

RATRI
With all her eyes the goddess Night looks
forth approaching many a spot
She hath put all her glories on
Immortal, she hath filled the waste, the
goddess hath filled height and depth
She conquers darkness with her light
The goddess as she comes, has put her
sister Dawn in her place".

(R.V-XI, 127, 3-8)

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The Dawn and the Morning are seen in their dual divinity. The two goddesses endlessly follow similar paths but they never cross nor is there any rivalry between them. They are indeed the divine mothers of the celestial order (*Rita*).

Durga Mahishasuramardini–Killer of the Buffalo Demon, Mahabalipuram

Earth, water, tree and plant maintain the spatial balance of the cosmos, the night and the dawn are the keepers of the celestial temporal order and each is the goddess, mother, wife, woman or girl. They are essential for the celestial or terrestrial order, the *Rita* a central concept of Indian cosmology and philosophic thought. Any disturbance in the order needs penance, ritual or sacrifice.

But the earth and waters, the sky and the nether-world must have a centre, and hub around which the wheel moves spatially and temporally. This mythical centre is the Mount Meru or Mandara known by different names in other cosmologies. In India, the daughter of this Mountain, Himavat, is Himavati or Uma or Parvati. In an earlier incarnation, she is Sati who consumes herself in the fire. As Uma, she is Girija (the daughter of the Mountain), and now she is also Aparna who does not partake even of leaves. She goes through penance to bring the waters of the Ganga down to earth. The woman goes through penance so as to become the consort of Siva. Uma is no ordinary girl, no princess. She is of divine descent and perhaps none other than the great mother herself. As a maiden, she is quintessence of all virtue and beauty and destined to marry Siva and become the other half of his body. She waits upon him, worships him with flowers and

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with water. He tests her disguised as a *Yogi* and ultimately accepts her. Their alliance is no mere romantic love and thus their nuptial becomes a prototype for human marriage and provides a divine precedence and model for conjugal love so necessary for the maintenance of the terrestrial order. Kalidasa immortalizes the myth in his work *Kumarasambhava* on which he presents the model of conjugal inseparability which leads to the most important idea of the *Ardhanarisvara*, the androgynous primeval being.

All through, Uma the fair and resplendent, is quiet and austere but never submissive: she is aware right through of the Ganga in Siva's locks. The daughter of the Himalayas and the celestial flow of the heavens have a playful rivalry which constituted the theme of many sculptural reliefs, mural paintings and medieval poetry. Both aspects of conjugal harmony and the respective austerities of Uma and Siva run parallel. In her mood of dynamism or fierceness, she becomes Kali who challenges Siva in a dance. Together the two dance, symbolizing the life process of the universe and its creatures.

Each of the goddesses enumerated above are also dancers signifying the rhythm movement of the universe and the music of the spheres.

Among the bewildering complexity of goddesses and women, nymphs and dancers who people the pages of Indian literature and fill the walls of Indian stupas and temples one can discern an unifying undercurrent. This is manifest in the myth of Uma and Siva which explicitly incorporates the principle of woman as complementary to the male principle. Uma is above all the energy principle the female principle of creation. She is fair or dark as the god is benign (*saumya*) or fierce (*raudra*). Thus Saraswati, Uma, Girija are white, Durga, Lakshmi, red and Kali dark and black.

Energy (*Sakti*) is manifested through them all, whether earth, river, trees, plant or mountain. But she is hardly ever exclusive, independent. She is the indispensable half of the male principle and thus if on the mundane plane Manu says that she is either daughter, wife or mother, dependent upon the father, husband or son, he is perhaps voicing a whole culture based on the principle of complementariness, and interdependence. The statement has to be understood along with the other where it is stated that the woman's presence brings the blessings of the gods and that as teacher, she is equal to a thousand fathers.

At the level of speculative thought and iconical symbol, the conception of complementariness and of eternal energy self annihilating and self rejuvenating,

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it can be recognised as the *lingam* and the *yoni* (phallus and the waters) and the Siva and Sakti: the *Purusha* and *Prakriti* (cosmic being and nature).

So if God exists as the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe, he must also possess infinite power through which he creates, preserves and destroys the universe. In fact, his very being presupposes infinite power by virtue of which he himself exists. This belief in the power of God is a universal belief; the Indian views this power or universal energy as something like a female counterpart of the possessor of this power. This power or *Sakti* being conceived as a counterpart of the possessor of *Sakti* came to be recognised as the consort of the possessor. Thus no God is manifest without his *Sakti*. On the philosophic level, the *Brhadanarayana Upanishad* enumerates the philosophy of this energy principle:

"In the beginning was the cosmic being as the *Atman* (Soul) in human form who could never feel happy or enjoy himself through any process of self realization for he was all alone. So he desired a second to him." His being was something like a neutral point where the ultimate principles of the male and female lay unified in deep embrace as it were. This unified being divided himself into two — as the male and female which formed the first pair and all the pairs of the universe are the replicas of this first pair.

Ardhanariswara- 11th Cent. A.D.
Karuthatankudi- South India

In all schools of thought particularly Buddhist and Hindu, the idea of *Sakti* began to play an important role. Whatever has been created in the phenomenal world has been created from the union of the two, energy and matter, the consumer and the consumed. They represent the two aspects of the non-dual truth, the one internal and the other external—one illuminating unchangeable and immortal (*amurta*) and the other obstructive, gross and perishable: the one is cause potency, the other effect potency. So the *Svetashastara Upanishad* says: "Know *Maya* (the unspeakable mysterious power of God) as *Prakriti* (Nature) and possessor of *Maya* as the Great Lord (Maheshwar)", and again, "He who is one and colourless brings forth various colours through the agency of his various

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types of powers". Finally, she is *Maya* and as Radhakrishnan explains:

"The verb *mame* or the noun *manam* or *mayam* (magic deed or design) or the plural *meyas,* all aspects of *maya* commonly translated is illusion. *Maya* indicates the power of the gods and the demons to take many measurable transitory forms (*Mayas*) the manifoldness of which are a reflection or manifestation of the ultimate but never the ultimate."

Mahishasuramardini (Durga as killer of the Buffalo demon) 7th Cent. A.D.- Mahabalipuram

The concept of the ultimate unmanifest and the manifold manifestations evolves into the myth of Krsna the dark lord and the innumerable gopis, the diversified manifest. While it is not necessary to elaborate on this conception, here in the context of the rise of Vaisnavism, it is important to remember that the conception of the multiplicity of manifest and the wholeness of the unmanifest would logically lead to the myth of Krsna and the gopis. However into this myth of the Krsna and the gopis, the one male and many females, enters the figure of Radha. Although she has earlier prototypes, Jayadeva, the writer of the *Giia-Govinda* gives her human flesh and blood unlike any of her slightly characterised predecessors. She is woman, no doubt, longing, pining, full of misgivings, mistrust, jealousy, consequent repentance and reconciliation, but she is divine in her union. She takes the initiative in the love affair, and through the twenty four cantos, we see the woman develop into the mighty goddess, Sri, Lakshmi and Chandi, for whom the god undergoes as much longing, pain and suffering. If the manifest human yearns for god, the god also is incomplete without her. The union of Radha and Krsna couched in human language is the symbol of the eternal interplay of the human and the divine the female and the male. Although thus, Radha and Krsna become one amongst

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all the other pairs, the position of Radha as the symbol of the human love for the divine remains unique in Indian myth and literature. It constitutes a most important distinct stream in post twelfth century literature, art and theology on which more can be said elsewhere and independently. Here it is only necessary to link it with the central conception of *Maya* as the multiple manifestation of energy.

To return however to the conception of *Maya* and *Prakriti* (Nature), *Prakriti* is always the primal material nature. The prefix *Pra* indicates a natural process (urge), *kriti* (to create). In this context it has both an active and passive sense of both producing and produced. She becomes the active female principle through which the inactive male principle of the cosmos is manifested. Together they constitute Nature and its dual function of generation and destruction which are of necessity interdependent. No wonder *Prakriti* (nature) is personified as goddess of the cosmic will and energy of the evolutionary process. Thus she is Sakti (energy) the eternal dancer (*nartaki*) who dances before the *Purusha* (the male) in a voluntary act of the display of her dynamic capacities and her power of flux.

There have been countless interpretations of Siva, Sakti, Purusha, and Prakriti in Indian philosophy. Fundamentally, Siva and Sakti, Purusha and Prakriti are two aspects of the same truth, the static and the dynamic, the negative and the positive, the abstract and the concrete, the male and the female. In the Buddhist Tantras the non-dual perfectly illumined consciousness is the highest truth from which flow the two currents of *shunyata* (the perfect knowledge of the essencelessness of things) and *karuna* (universal compassion) or *pra jna* (perfect enlightenment) and *upaya* (expedience). *Pra jna* is static the negative aspect of the truth, while *upaya,* is dynamic, the positive aspect: the *pra jna* and *upaya* of the Buddhist Tantras stand for the same truth as the Sakti and Siva of the Hindu Tantras with the peculiarity that unlike the Hindu Tantras, the Buddhist Tantras call the static or negative aspect of the truth the female and the dynamic or positive aspect the male".

The Hindu and Buddhist Tantric pantheon thus cumulatively evolves into a series of pairs Siva and Parvati, Visnu and Lakshmi or Sri Rama and Sita, Krishna and Radha, and finally Siva and Parvati as *Ardhanarisvara* where the two are together inseparable in one body.

From the above narration it will be clear that although the female principle is dominant, it is not exclusive. Also the woman is not evil or the cause of the original sin. This basic difference makes Indian culture different from its contemporary Western counterparts. The Devi is the embodiment of energy in

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the three states of human consciousness, called *Jagrat* (awakening) *svapna* (dream state) and *sushupti* (sleep or inertia) or the three constituents of the self, spoken of as *manas, prana* and *vak,* (Mind, Life and Matter). The conflict described in the *Devi Mahatmya,* where she vanquished three sets of demons, is thus at the level of Psychic Man (Madhu-Kaitabha), at the level of the Vital Man (the *uttaracharita*—the buffalo Mahisha) and at the level of the Physical Man (Sumbha-Nisumbha), Chanda and Munda and Raktabija. The goddess combines in her form the three *gunas,* three types of human tendencies, the purified and subtle, the dynamic and gross. She is *satvika, rajas* and *tamas.* She moves from the gross, physical to the subtle metaphysical. Her complete victory implies the annihilation of darkness on these three planes. The victory of the goddess is the universal vindication of the divine principle against the forces of darkness and disorder and she is the restorer of the cosmic order.

The goddesses of whom we have spoken are all the manifestations of this Supreme Devi—energy, on all the planes and in all the elements of the world. It is this conception which becomes the basis of the heroines of Sanskrit literature, epic and lyrical.

While seemingly they are all law-abiding faithful and submissive, they are all celestial in one sense or another. The heroine of Ramayana the ideal of Indian womanhood, Sita, is no ordinary human. She is born of the earth found in the furrows of the field and returns to the womb of the mother. In all her trials and tribulations, she is unruffled strong and unsubmissive. So is Kunti, (the earth principle) the mother of the five Pandavas, who also gave birth to her first son Karna through divine intervention and so is Draupadi (whether she represents polyandry or not), she is always a symbol of understanding and fortitude. And finally, there are the wives who are deserted or who are separated from their lovers or husbands but who through penance, (*tapasya*) and discipline and through suffering invariably are victorious and achieve a harmony. They are the human counterparts of Sati, Uma and Parvati. The moral of each of these stories is that although the woman suffers, longs, yearns or battles against adversities, it is she who in the last analysis, brings life, pulls the heroes out of danger and death and is thus the object of respect or veneration. Through her suffering both she and her male counterpart are purified and ultimately the two unite. Earth, tree, water and sky principles continue to be the basis of these women characters. Sita is the earth. Urvasi, the tree or river goddess, Uma or Parvati of Kalidasa, the mountain maiden. They all people the dramas and epics of Sanskrit literature and are only another aspect of the mythical cosmogony and speculative thought. Each in her distinctive manner embodies the creative principle of energy.

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The courtesans of vedic literature and classical Sanskrit literature are not women of ill-fame. They have a special role to play. Although strictly outside society, they are cultivated, beautiful and above all, good and even virtuous. Urvasi herself is a celestial courtesan of Indra's Court, sent to earth for a flaw in acting. So is Menaka. But Menaka is the mother of Sakuntala and of Uma. So are the others. They represent the woman who is essential in the social order, but not necessarily only in the bondage of wedlock. Vasantasena of Bhasa's play and Sudraka's play is a class by herself. She too suffers at the hands of the viliains of the court but is ultimately united to her simple and faithful Charudatta. In short, their vindication after a period of perils and tribulations must lead to the harmony of union.

The celestial and terrestrial courtesans, however, can also be temptresses, not like Medusa, but through their alluring charm, they can bring about the downfall of weak men. Tillottama of epic literature is the dancer courtesan par excellence However, there are few of that kind. Largely they are benign, patterned on Menaka, Urvasi, Vasantasena, Amrapali and others in Buddhist literature who became monks. There are then the monks, the nuns and *sanyasinis* of literature. The first human prototype of the scholary woman is Gargi the daughter of Vachaka. She debates with Yajnavalkya. Her first question is "What is the warp and woof that links all that is above the sky beneath the earth and between them both or that which links what people call past, present and future?" 'Space' replies Yajnavalkaya. When Gargi asks him to elaborate he elaborates that the warp and woof uniting time and space and all existence is an indissoluble whole, self-existence.

But all this beauty and energy is only one side of the coin. If mythology, literature, speculative thought, art and sculpture and painting conceives of the woman as the beautiful energy principle, the law-givers and social scientists of ancient and medieval India relegate her to the home forever, consider her impure and sometimes unworthy of education. While this male chauvinism provides the basis of many social ills in Indian society at the level of legal and social rights, it did nevertheless consider her as the supreme mistress of the home and the finest teacher. Her position as mother, wife and daughter was sacrosanct and is ever so. The law-giver and the social organiser give her different rights which are complementary to a man's but not equal rights. The principle of competition is eliminated. This had its positive and negative aspects.

Women's lib therefore acquires a different complexion in the Indian context. The principle of complimentariness is so ingrained that it does not allow either

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man or woman to consider themselves in a race for the same goals. Their areas and spheres of work are different and distinct but complementary. However in the past two hundred years, much has happened in the Indian sub-continent to negate the principle, we have spoken about. Thus, although at the plane of thought, religion and ritual, she occupies a significantly high status, in middle class social structure, she suffers as her counterpart in other parts of the world. However, time and again whenever a voice has been raised against oppression, it is both men and women who have raised it. It is significant that all religious and social reformers, Raja Rammohan Roy, SwamiVivekananda, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Gandhi and Nehru have been the protagonists of women's freedom and equality. But whenever a woman has broken the norms, she has been accepted as leader because she embodies the energy principle and is Devi. The countless women saints, poetesses and political leaders of the Indian sub-continent belong to this category. Little wonder that despite the proverbial backwardness and underdevelopment, it is these parts of the world where woman leaders have been more readily accepted than in the West. Whether it was Razia Begum or Chand Bibi or a Rani Jhansi, or Andal or a Habba Khatun or Lalla or Mirabai, or Mrs. Gandhi, they have been considered as re-incarnation of the Devi in human form.

Contemporary Indian fiction and poetry have drawn upon these prototypes of myth, legend and history for their characters. The social reformers have drawn up the women who are outside society; the courtesans and the prostitutes who have upheld moral and social values. Sarat Chandra, a writer of Bengal crowds his novels with them. Rabindranath and Aurobindo pick upon mythical characters. Premchand is the realist who recreates rural India, but he too never negates the principles enumerated above.

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Inter-Relationship of the Arts

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

Art in India was never dissociated from other aspects of life or from other disciplines. This is evident from the literary and the archaeological evidence throughout the history of India. The continuity could be maintained only because the tradition itself had an in-built paradigm of facilitating change, constantly adjusting itself to a contemporaneity of time and place while adhering to certain underlying principles which were perennial and immutable. The dynamics of the still centre and the ever kaleidoscopically changing movements of styles, schools and artistic expressions were sustained in different milieus and at different levels of society through different diverse media. The aesthetics emerged from a shared world-view with the acceptance of diversity in form. Any discussion on the inter-relationship of the Indian arts at the level of theory or praxis is meaningful only if we realize that all the Indian arts are as if the myriad petals of a single flower. Each petal is clearly definable, has autonomy in shape and form, but has life and vitality only as part of a 'whole'. The contemporary debate of the autonomy of the specific arts vs. the inter-relationship and inter-dependence of the arts has to be viewed from the point of view of the arts which were bound together as emerging from as shared world-view and shared aesthetics, and, those others which were and are expressions of an individual experience through a specific artistic media.

In the former case, the shared world-view, the subscription or commitment to a particular aesthetics, (in this case, the *rasa* theory) binds the diverse arts at the level of artistic experience of the creator and the ultimate goal of evoking that experience in the spectator.

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The media, the instruments used for expression, are diverse, autonomous but analogous and cognate. Here, the content is also shared–whether myth or the archetypes. There is an overlap of techniques but each of these are the vehicles of communicating an impersonal experience. In the second case, the centre of the concern is the medium itself–whether painting, sculpture, music, dance, or pottery. The individual creation is from a unique experience of the person and in the process of that creation he does universalize or abstract, occasionally depending upon the milieu, shared experience and interaction. There is a give and take influence of the other arts. The primacy of the single art-whether visual or kinetic or aural is clearly maintained. The relationship with the other art is of a primary and a secondary nature. Comparisons between the arts are of the final product. Modern painting can be compared to a modem piece of music or critical appraisal can be made of how a painting has been stimulated by a verbal imagery or how a poetic metaphor has emerged from a visual experience. However, they may or may not emerge from a shared unitary vision.

These are two different paths. Both valid, creatively sustainable but distinct. Without setting up a contrived confrontation between the traditional arts or modernity, or speaking about ancient, medieval and contemporary, this change in vision and approach has to be recognized with respect. At this moment of initiating this dialogue, it would be pertinent to perhaps pause to reflect on the unified vision which was responsible for the inter-relationship and interpenetration of the Indian arts. I can do no more than draw attention to a few of the fundamental paradigms which pervade all aspects of the cultural heritage but particularly the arts. These are the common fundamentals of all the arts.

Basic was the recognition of sustaining an inner landscape of man which is the centre and the recognition that it expresses itself in an outer landscape of man comprising myriad petals of a lotus flower. Whenever, however, the vision may have come, it is clear that had this not been the guiding star of this country, it would not have been possible for it to have a staggering multiplicity of racial strands, languages, religions, philosophy systems, social structures and artistic expressions, all webbed together in one wholeness. The proverbial staggering multiplicity is held together as planets in a single astronomical orbit. Stated differently, all manifestations in time and space, varied and different, are the rainbow colours of a single white luminosity.

The Indian arts, particularly its poetry, architecture, sculpture, painting, music and dance reflect this vision and evolves methodologies of structure and form

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through multimedia communication systems only once again to evoke this wholeness.

Two fundamental paradigms evolved for comprehending the physical phenomena, the rhythm of the universe and the mind and spirit of man as one ecological system. The first was the simple but most potent paradigm of the human body (*Purusha*).This body was made up of different systems, the digestive, the circulatory, the nervous, each inter-related and inter-dependent in which matter and the spirit, the physical and meta-physical, were contained. The body of man was the microcosm representing the macrocosm.

The second was the paradigm of a chariot wheel with a centre, a hub, spokes and a circumference. Here also the insistence was on the relationship of the still centre, the hub with the periphery. Centripetal and centrifugal forces were juxtaposed. There was an inner still centre formless, beyond form and an outer movement capable of multiplicity plurality but all contained within the circle. The centre was the symbol of the life of reflection, of individual introspection, statis , *nirvana, moksha,* the spokes and the area between different radii was the life of dynamic action comprising desire, pleasure, prosperity, knowledge, power, duty and conduct but all harnessed.

Time was cyclic, the beginning was the end and beginning. As in other ancient civilizations of the world, the awareness of outer space and the consciousness of the inner landscape of man was inter-related. The *RigVeda* stated it as "Truth is one but its expressions many". The Katha Upanishad spoke of the body of the man as the charioteer and the chariot wheel:

"Know thou the soul (atman) as riding in a chariot,
The *body as the chariot.*
Know thou the intellect (buddhi) as the chariot-driver,
and-the mind (manas) as the-reins.

The *senses (indriya), they say, are the horses:*
The *objects of sense, what they range over.*
The *self combined with senses and mind*
Wise men call 'the enjoyer'(bhoktri).
And again

"Higher than the senses are the objects of sense,
Higher than the objects of sense is the mind (manas):

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And higher than the mind is the intellect (buddhi).
Higher than the intellect in the Great Self (atman.)"

Here we can do no more than draw attention to how all the arts in India developed on the ground plan of this understanding of the universe. The aesthetic experience born out of life bound by it but in the ultimate was universal and transcendental: the artistic creations were the embodiment in specific form of this experience. The form was guided by cultural boundaries specificity of periods, regions, lifestyles, motifs, but all individually and together was an expression at the micro or macro level, the experiences of balance proportion, harmony and concord.

Indian architecture–whether the *stupas* or the temples or the mosques or the city plans or domestic architecture, humble and modest–embodies this world-view: the mud walls, the brick and stone, ground or elevation plans are an orchestration of multiple forms flowing out of and flowing into a centre. Invariably it begins with a point of unity and manifests it through a spectrum of multiple form which in turn evoke harmony and equanimity. There is a first and foremost a centre. This centre enlarges itself into a vast complex either as a circle or as a square, is filled with crowded abundance of life in all its variety. The ornamentation and the decoration, representational or abstract, play their role to an ascending oneness vertically and a closing in and gathering of all energies horizontally from the outer to the inner. Brick by brick, stone by stone, and immense epic poem of the infinite is made. Each detail can be separated but in fact none is autonomous: each unit is the part of the whole, interwoven and interlocked. In its totality, it represents heaven on earth, the central mountain, the Sumeru. Ultimately it is the cosmic order on earth, arousing the dominant mood of wonder (*Vismaya*) and evoking a transcendental experience of bliss.

Whether the observer, participator or pilgrim moves from the outside to the inside or circumbulates the stupa temple or mosque until he reaches the centre which represents-the ultimate void, the *sunya, nirvana* or *moksha.* Alternately, he figuratively ascends the pinnacle whether in the austere simplicity of the spherical dome of the *stupa* or the *masjid* or through the crowded multiplicity of the temple. Sanchi and Bharut, the temples of North, South, Western or Eastern India, or the mosques speak the same language of transcendence and of heightened experience despite the cultural specifies of each of these monuments. Impersonality and intensity are the twin paradoxical demands of this art which is life-bound and beyond it. These monuments bear testimony to the concretization

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of this vision through a perfect language of art which was as universal, pan-Indian as specific in time, region or locality.

Sculpture likewise manifests this vision of wholeness through a methodology of impersonalisation Indian figurative art is not portraiture of the specific. Each image is an embodiment of a dominant abstracted impersonalized state or mood in a given stance or pose evoking stillness and dynamic movement together. Each is a complete world unto itself, related to life born of life, part of the cultural fabric, but not it. Buddha is Buddha, the historical prince Siddhartha, and Sakyamuni, but he is more: he is compassion, pathos and grace in absolute. The spirit and soul of the cosmic infinite is contained in the body of the particular but impersonal form. The image is not the historical figure–and it is not the cultural specific in which it is articulated: a Kushan, Gupta, Pala or for that matter an Indonesian, Cambodian, a Khmer, Japanese and Chinese Buddha can be clearly identifiable.

They are distinguishable and dateable, but in the last analysis, they are beyond their cultural boundaries and are each a hypothesis, an aspect of the vast ocean of *karuna* (compassion) in all its multitudes of shades, tones and subtleties. The dominant mood of compassion (*karuna*) is encircled sometimes with many transient states represented as the vegetation, flora, fauna, *yakshis,* dryads, *gandharvas* and *apsaras,* each playing a specific role in building the totality, or it may be the single austere simple statement of the still centre of peace and enlightenment suggested through the symbols of the Buddha, the Bo tree, sandals, etc., or the human figure. Some contain the variety and some eschew it, but the impersonalized intensity of the mood of compassion is the residual taste, everlasting and universal.

The images of Siva and Vishnu, in their benign or demonic moods, as the *yogis* or Sadasivas, as the lovers or ascetics containing bi-unity as endrogynes (*Ardhanarisvara*) or combining the three principles of involution, evolution and devolution, as conjoined images of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesa, or only the principle of creation and destruction as Harihara, or as four-faced or three faced *lingas,* all articulate, once again, the same attribute of the internalized intangible experience of the unmanifested unity. The multiple faces and arms of the image are parts of whole and vehicles for the final evocation of the transcendental experience of bliss (*rasa*).

The famous image of Siva in Elephanta, called "*Trimurti*" is Siva as Sadasiva, as Parvati and as Aghora, the fierce one. Through the juxtaposition of three

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impersonalized states, a fourth that of complete equanimity is evoked. The multiple faces, the multiple arms are the artistic expression of this without form, beyond form, oneness and unity which is reflected through a spectrum of multiple forms each interlocked in a cohesive meaningful structure. In its totality, whether the iconical *lingam* or the *Trimurti* or the images with many faces, all evoke the response of an aesthetic experience heightened, subtle, and chiselled. The sculptural form, the particular stalk of lotus, the contours of vegetative creeper, the aquatic and terrestrial animals, the *gandharvas*, and *apsaras*, and the human form accompanied by them or in isolation, standing, sitting or lying upon these or serpents, animals or dwarfs, is but the vehicle of a soul, meaning a concrete embodiment of an inner lower of inmost psychic significance and universal validity and meaning.

Everything in the sculptural relief or the individual stone or bronze image, whether the monumental reliefs of Sanchi, Amaravati, Halebid, Belur, Hampi, Konark, are monumental constituents of a cosmic design, almost a geometric diagram of an impersonalized state, an archetypal dominant mood with its concomitant transient emotions as symbols. In turn, the relief or the image evokes an analogous state of whether love *shringara* or heroism, or valour of fierceness or humour or sheer joy. One has only to look at the images of the dancing Nataraja of Siva or the figures of Durga slaying the demon Mahisha and the vast variety of Vishnu images to be convinced of the fact that as in architecture, the sculpture begins from as till centre, builds upon a central axis and again makes a construct of expanding circles with diameters, radii, all moving into the centre and of moving out of the centre.

In short, theory and technique of plastic expression is bassed on a system of multilayered correspondences. There is a correspondence of lines, straight, erect, symmetrical, diagonal or curved in spiral or otherwise and impersonalized mood or emotion, a correspondence between certain proportions and altitudes of standing; sifting and lying and certain moods dominant or subsidiary. Each part of the relief or each micro unit of the human figure plays its role–the eyes, nose, ears, face, torso and limbs and each physical gesture singly and in combination is suggestive of an inner meaning which in its totality suggests an impersonal emotion and thus evokes a transcendental heightened experience. The content, the particular motif, the style, the costume and coiffure, all have an individually enabling the spectator to date and localise these reliefs, images within their cultural boundaries, but the ultimate taste and relish of *rasa* (experience) is trans-cultural or trans-national.

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Painting schools and styles, ranging from those of Ajanta, Ellora to the caves of Bagh and murals of Alchi, give further evidence of this avowed faith and commitment to the impersonalized dominant moods (archetypals), which have been and are expressed in cultural specifies. At one level, there are as many schools of paintings as there are dynasties, on another level, each is the reflector of an impersonalisation which has been the beginning and is the ultimate goal. Again, the range is staggering in its multiplicity ranging from Ajanta to Sittanavasal—the Islamic geometrical designs. However, once again, in each of these, the archetypal dominant states, the reaching out to infinity and the expression through cultural specific idiom is vital and fundamental. Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain figurative art is as abstract as Islamic calligraphy. Lines alone, with or without colour in their use, as straight, terse, diagonal, ascending or descending, curved lines as intertwined spirals or half crescents, are all symbolic of inner states of mind, dominant and subsidiary emotions: in their totality, whether as figurative art or as abstract lines, they embody the archetypal universal and follow the same principle.

The characters, heroes and heroines of epic poetry and drama are also archetypes as is the world of flora, fauna, animal or birdlife. A formal language of symbols, signs and motifs conveys universal meaning within and outside cultural boundaries. The inner dynamics of the poetry of Valmiki, Kalidasa or the isometrical shapes of Islamic calligraphy are comparable. Again, the abstract and the concrete move together. Indian poetry transforms the notion of ecological balances into the recurrent rhythm of the season: plants, animal, human, water, earth, fire, sky are again in dialogue. The passage of annual time, the seasons acquire deep meaning and so spring, summer, autumn, and winter are valid for themselves and in what they convey beyond themselves.

These are the more permanent arts, frozen at a moment of time for posterity. What about the occurent arts, those of music and dance, theoral recitations and the dramatic experience. They are shaped and formed in the art of creation, live for the moment, the specific duration. Now instead of time being frozen in consecrated space, space is consecrated in time of fixed duration. The beginning and end of the performance in sound or movement is a consecration when the cosmos is made anew for that duration: it is complete and whole whether of five minutes or two hours or five days enactment. The beginning is the same, the still centre, the immutable invariable inwardness; the fixed note of the scale or the stances of the dancer. There upon is an enlargement in expanding concentric circles of the cosmos whether through one or three octaves, the exploration of space in all its variety of shares of tonality, micro-units of sounds, light, shade,

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stresses, accents, and discriminating exclusion of particular notes. The edifice is built with sound; it is architectonic in character. Now the listener circumbulates as the pilgrim did the *stupa* in clockwise but ascending direction. Through the structured patterning of sound the multitude of life in its endless variety is presented, a dominant mood is created; together the still centre and its flowerings like alotus petal evoke the state of heightened aesthetic experience. While the creator performer begins with the state of internalized *yoga* and express through consummate skill the dominant mood, the listener responds by returning to the state of bliss where the artist had begun. Again, impersonalized emotion, a dominant mood, a multiplicity of sound, symbols and motifs combined with intensity, create an icon in music which the listener can worship as he could, the sculptural image in stone or bronze. In India, images are called *mantra murtis* (images of chants) and music is the ultimate *Nada Brahma* contained in a single sound *Oum* or its elaboration.

And finally through a beautiful and complete language of movement, Indian dance provides the most concrete manifestation of the inner state and vision. The dance, like poetry, music and sculpture, seeks to communicate universal, impersonal emotion and through the very medium of the human form, it transcends the physical plane: in its technique, it employs the technique of all the arts and it is impossible to comprehend the architectonic structure of this form without being aware of the complex techniques of the other arts which it constantly and faithfully employs and synthesizes. The themes which the Indian dancer portrays are not only the raw material of literature, but are also the finished products of literary creation; the music which seems to accompany the dance is actually the life breath of its structure and, indeed, dance interprets in movement what music interprets in sound: the postures and the stances it attains are the poses which the sculptor models; all these the dancer imbues with a living spirit of movement in a composition of form which is both sensuous and spiritual.

The inter-relationship of the arts can be investigated within this framework of a unified vision and diversities of formal elements. The interdependence of text and image of the myth and the metaphor is intrinsic in the creative process..Today, we can re-evaluate this discourse both from the point of view of modern theories of criticism as also against the most recent trends of artistic expressions through multi-media.

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The Flying Messenger

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

Amongst the 108 cadences of movements known as the *karanas* described in Chapter IV of the *Natyasastra* is a variety which may be classified as the *Vrscika.* Literally speaking, this means the scorpion or *"scorpion-legged"*.

The most important feature of this *karana* is an extension of one leg, either sideways or to back or front, extended forward or crossing. The cadence takes its name from this important feature, and all the cadences belonging to this category arrive in a moment of time at a pose, which gives the impression of kneeling in static positions and flying in dynamic movements.

The *Natyasastra* lists nearly ten *karanas* of this variety such as the *Nikuncita,* the *Vrscika kuttila*, the *Lata vrscika* the *Vrscika recita, Vrscika,* the *Mayuralalita Simharksita,* the *Lalatatilaka.* To these could be added the three *karanas* which derive their movement from the *cari* positions and which may be roughly grouped as the *Bhujangatrasita* variety, namely the *Bhujangatrasita,* the *Bhujangatrasita recita* and the *Bhujangancita:* one more *karana* called the *Vidyudbhranta* could be included. The latter four form a distinct separate group which is characterised by a crossing.

In terms of kinetics, one has to understand this as a movement of the lower limb, either by using the whole leg as a unit or as two sections of the thigh and the calf with a break in line by an extension or flexion of the knee resulting in an acute or obtuse angle. The static leg is usually bent with the knee turned outward sideways, termed in the *Natyasastra* as the *ksipta* position in some contexts, and *nata* in others. The torso, the lower waist and upper chest can be treated in a

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variety of ways so can the upper limbs, to complement the lower limb position: mainly it can be frontal or profile or a posterior view or an anterior view of the upper torso and a posterior view of the lower limbs. The close connection between dance and sculpture in the Asian and Indian artistic traditions needs no restatement. Any lay observer is aware of the similarity of approach and treatment of the human form in the twin arts. From the earliest times, the dancing figure inspired the sculptor and the sculpturesque beauty of line and form inspired the dancer: the connection was not just on the level of spirit and content but also concrete form. Indonesian, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, Burmese and Ceylonese dance and sculpture leave the same impression. There is an awareness immediately of an intimate connection between the two art forms in a region and amongst traditions of dance and sculpture in different regions. A closer scrutiny reveals that this overwhelming impression is created on account of a proximity of content and a similarity of techniques of stylization employed in sculpture and dance.

While it is not possible to go into the fascinating and complex history of interaction between Indian and Asian artistic traditions, it would be worthwhile to understand the nature of this similarity and distinctiveness in the context of some specific motifs, such as the *Vrscika karana* on account of its extraordinary popularity in dance technique and its continued depiction and portrayal in the sculptural mural and fresco traditions of South East Asia.

In India, one of the first portrayals of this occurs in the context of the motif of the flying *vidyadharas, gandharvas, mithunas,* dancing *kinnaras* and other miscellaneous niche and corner figures. While it is true that most of them do not depict dance poses and very many of them have not been modelled with dance in view, many of them can be classified as dance poses even if they occur on arches, niches and corners and fulfil a purely architectural function.

The sculptural representation of *gandharva* and *apsara* and of male and female forms flying are found in Indian art from the earliest times. Actually by the time Bharata codified movements of dance, a high degree of stylization must have already taken place to enable him to prescribe the rules for movements suggestive of flying, leaping and kneeling in many chapters of his work. The sculptural representation may well have preceded Bharata's codification.

Movements of flying could have been suggested in a variety of ways and an obvious one could be to take a leap in the air by losing or suggesting a loss of contact with the ground. In sculpture also, the suggestion of flying could be communicated through a pair of wings as is common in the European tradition.

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Fig. 1 Kartikeya (11th Century), Orissa

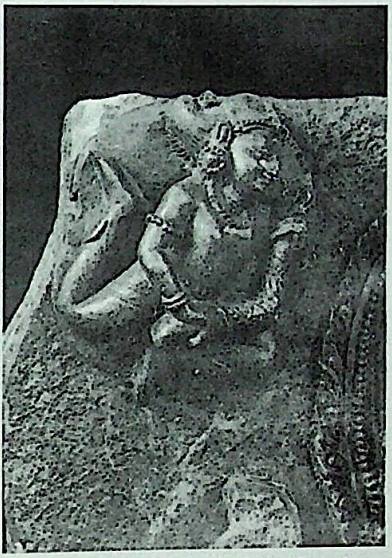

Fig. 2 Flying figure, Duladeo Temple, Khajuraho

Although wings have been used in some sculptural representations in Sanci and Bharhut and in a few examples of Indonesian sculpture and some frescoes in Pagan, by and large, this has been avoided in the Asian and Indian artistic traditions. In these traditions the movement is suggested through a stance which is not realistic but is stylized and symbolic even if giving the impression of natural ease. The principle uniformly followed allows movement only of one leg and at no time

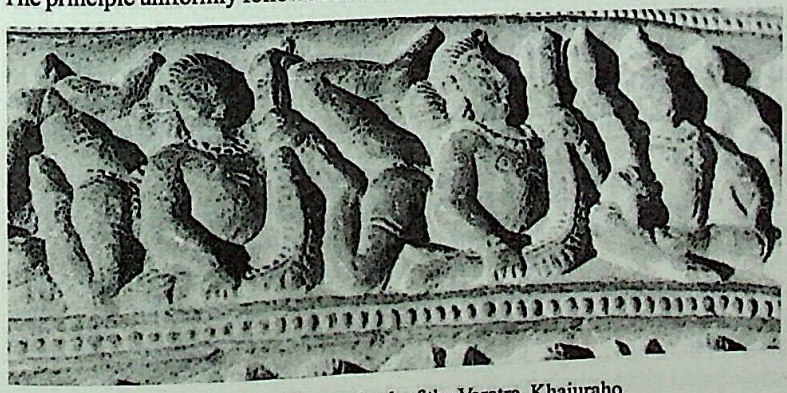

Fig. 3 Flying figures, back of the Varatra, Khajuraho

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is the forking of the legs permitted. This is adhered to, without exception in all representations of the motif throughout the sculptural and dance tradition of the region covering the Indian sub-continent, many countries of South East Asia, extending over a period of ten centuries and more.

The *vidyadhara* from Ranigumpha Udaygiri caves is perhaps the earliest example of the historical period. A celestial figure carrying a tray of garlands is seen with one knee bent in front and the other leg extended at the back in an arch. The weight of the body is on the foot of the bent knee in front and the tray of flowers in one hand helps the forward thrust of the figure.

Although the pose cannot be clearly identified as a position of the *Vrscika karana* it is a very definite precursor of the motif. Such precursors can also be seen in the poses of the flying figures and the couples seen on the arches of Bharhut, Sanci and Karli. In Sanci we also come across one or two winged figures.

By the time we come to Mathura, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda, the motif shows remarkable development. Slabs, *toranas,* pillars, medallions depict a variety of poses in which flying or kneeling for adoration of the Buddha is depicted by a knee bent in front either touching the ground or the whole calf resting on the ground with the thigh resting on it or just the foot touching the ground and the knee in line with the torso: the other leg is extended, thrown backwards or sideways with the thigh either at the level of the ground or below the torso; the calf and foot are sometimes at the level of the waist or even shoulders. In the latter case, an outward flexion results in a raising of the free extended calf and foot. These poses can be identified as the *Kuncita karana* or *Vrscika recita karana.* Sometimes an impression of dynamism is created in limited space through the grace, elegance and flow of the released extended leg. In the stupas of Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda there are innumerable examples and variations of these, specially when they occur in limited space on a semicircular *torana* arch/stupa.

In a terracotta from Sonkh, Mathura excavated recently the same *karana* has been portrayed in a circular disc with remarkable ingenuity. A detailed analysis of the relief makes it clear that the artist was fully conversant with earlier techniques and that he surpassed them in using the motif in limited circular space. In a medallion from Amaravati we have the first depiction of the *Bhujangancita* variety in a court scene. This is without doubt a precursor of a pose which culminated ultimately in the *Nataraja* pose of the *Bhujangatrasita* variety seen

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in all parts of India specially of the Pallava, Chola and Vijayanagaram Schools. But the consideration of the *Bhujangatrasita* is not our chief concern here. Multiple Examples of the *vrscika* pose can be seen in Gupta-sculptures from Deogarh, Nalanda and finally Elura where we find some outstanding examples of the flying motif. Unlike Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda, in the Kailasa temple the flying figures occur on walls, freed in space without fulfilling any architectural function. Instead of the *Urdhvalata* arch of the leg being taken to the high head region the extended leg is taken to a much lower level than the level of the flexed knees. A sense of release from gravity is created by this, seemingly careless extension. The *siddhas* of Mamallapuram are close seconds to the dynamic flying figures of Elura: it is this pose which gives the impression of space in spite of the crowded multiplicity of figures. It should be noted that until the seventh and eighth centuries no twisting of the torso or turning around the sacrum (trika) is noticed. The torso is frontal or in profile, but never screwed or spiral. In medieval sculpture a significant development takes place: most of the flying figures from the 8th century onwards have a *nata* or *ksipta* position of the knee, as also a *nata* bend of the side (*parsva*) and this becomes increasingly accentuated. The trend culminates in the sculptures of Khajuraho and Konaraka where the waist is screwed or spiraled completely thus meeting the description in dance texts of a *vivartita* or *nivrta* movement. In the temples of Khajuraho these dancing and singing *Kinnara, Gandharva* and *Yaksha* attain complex poses which tax our credulity. A variety of rhythmic lines and curves together leave an impression of difficult turns, twists and even contortions. Their figures occur in niches, or corners on walls everywhere and even on the reliefs of the back of *Varaha.* Many of them can be identified as the *Vrscika kuttila* (Fig. I) or the *Vrscika recita karanas* (Fig. 2) and the variations of the *Lalatatilaka* (Fig. 3).

In Indian dance also, this movement is seen in practically all styles of dance ranging from the tribal and folk to the sophisticated chiselled classical forms. In Himachal Pradesh, the collective dances of the hill regions use a movement which is reminiscent of the kneeling positions seen in the scenes depicting the adoration of the Buddha in Amaravati sculptures. In Mayurbhanj Chhau and in the Seraikella Chhau there are a series of movements which use the *Vrscika* leg extension. The leaps and jumps so characteristic of Mayurbhanj Chhu dancing are characterised by these extensions and elevations. In Bharatanatyam one witnesses these in the *adavus* of the *Tat Tai Tam* variety where both a side leg extension as also a twisting of the torso around the sacrum is noticed. They are also seen in the *pui adavu.* In the *abhinaya* portions Hanuman is depicted by the dancer by suddenly sitting on the ground with one bent knee in front and the other leg extended

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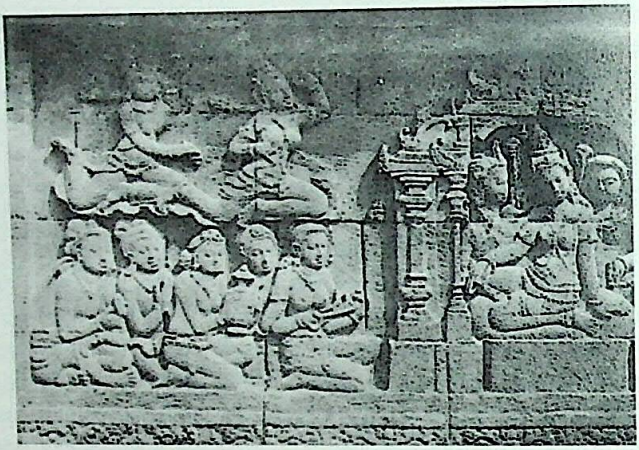

Fig. 4 Flying figures, Borobudur

backwards on the ground: here the pose suggests Hanuman the son of Pavana. The symbolism of content and form is complete. For the idea of the omnipresent Krsna playing the flute, the same pose is used.

Fig. 5 Hanuman crossing the sea, Panatarna

In the sculpture of Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand and of Yapahuwa of Ceylon and the murals of Pagan (Burma) there are innumerable examples of the *Vrscika karana,* with the *Kuttila* and the *Urdhvalata* movements.

In this brief survey we can take only one or two examples from each sculptural tradition as illustrations of the pervasive popularity of the pose in the sculptural and dance traditions of South East Asia. In Chandi Mendut (Indonesia) in the

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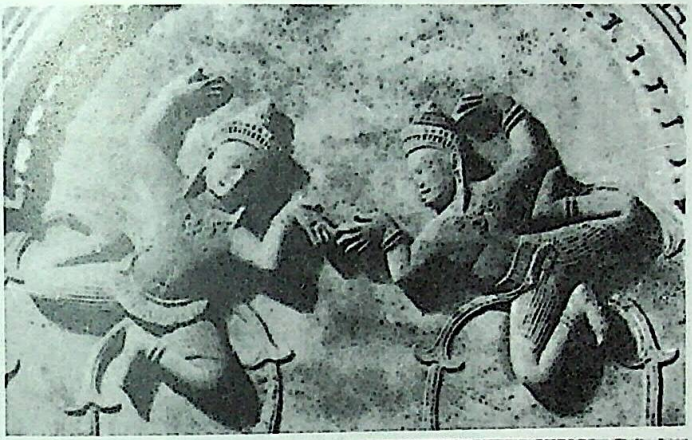

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Flying figures from Angkor

northern wing of the flight of stairs there occur two scenes in which the *Vrscika karana* is noticed. In one, the extended leg is at the same level as the bent knee in front and the torso is seen in profile: the balance of the figure is perfect. In Borobudur there is a prolific use of the motif in many contexts. An outstanding example is seen in the panel depicting the Buddha bathing in the Nairanjana river. The *gandharvas* surround the Buddha and are seen in varying movements of the *Vrscika karana.* One is in a simple *Vrscika,* the other is *Vrscika kuncita* and the third in a *Vrscika recita.* Practically every flying celestial being is seen in a chiseled pose of this category. (Fig. 4).

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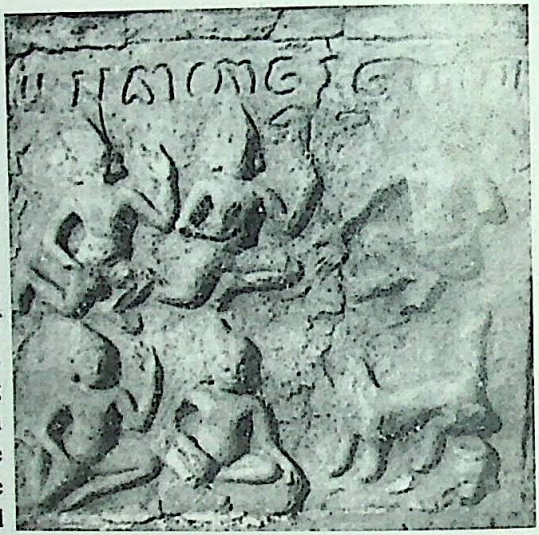

Fig. 8 Flying figures on Terracotta plaque from Petleck Pagoda, Burma

In the Lara Djnonggrang group in Prambanan there is a continuation of the tradition. Here one witnesses the pose not only in flying figures in the Ramayana panels but also in the dancing figures from the balustrade of the Siva temple. In the context of Indonesian art one must mention that these flying figures without wings and in the *vrscika* pose occur side by side with the innumerable *kinnaras* and *kinnaris* with wings. Most important amongst the Indonesian figures is the *garuda* figure seen in relief, stone and bronze. The *Kuncita karana* is his characteristic pose. In Chandi Djago and other temples of the Majhapahita period, Hanuman is often shown traversing lands and seas in this pose (Fig. 5). This is repeated in Panatran, Chandi Tigawangi in the last named it is seen in the depiction of the scenes from the story of Sri Tanjung. The amazing continuity of the motif in low bas-relief and subsequently in the Wayang figures is as puzzling as impressive.

In Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom, in the context of Ramayana, Mahabharata, as also other scenes, there is a recurrence of the motif (Fig. 6 & 7). Here also the arch determines the pose. The Khemer group has many walls and panels of such figures. Indonesian dancing, whether Javanese or Balinese and Khemer dancing frequently embodies this movement to show flying, moving in the sky, etc. In detail there are many definite differences and distinctions, but the principle first enunciated by Bharata, of the one knee bent or the unfolded leg and the other extended leg is universal. Illustrations will make the point clear of proximity in art forms and consanguinity of approach in different regions. Examples of the motif is found in Thai sculpture of varying periods (Dvaravati, Lopburi or Ayodhya periods). It occurs frequently in Thai dancing both Nang and Khon. The highly picturesque stylised stances of the fighting scenes in the Ramayana, the flight of

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Sita, are all executed through a beautifully controlled *Vrscika karana.* The particular movement is known as *Kinnari* in Thai dancing. It is an essential part of the training of Thai dancers both male and female, specially in the 'salutation of the celesteals known as *Thrp-Pranom.*

One would have thought that Burma may have discarded this sensuous motif. But no, here in the frescoes and murals of Pagan, the motif occurs often. The *gandharvas* fly, the *vidyadhoras* wear boots and have wings, but the pose is *Vrscika Kuttila.* (Fig. 8). In Burmese dancing, this achieves a high degree of intricacy and stylization. Indeed the marionettes of Burma have an articulation at the knee, just so that this sculpturesque effect can be created.

The motif is-seen in Ceylon: on the walls of Yapahuwa and in the murals of Sigiriya. The movement seems to have gone out of vogue, however, in Kandyan dancing, as it has become extinct in many styles of Indian dancing particularly Manipuri, Kathak and Kathakali.

The above survey will make it clear that these countries shared a self-conscious tradition of stylization. Within the large common base there was a continuous give and take, not only of literary themes philosophic and aesthetic ideas but also of specific aspects of artistic form and technique, each contributing to the other to evolve a distinct regional form.

The *Vrscika karana* is one amongst several motifs which are awaiting a detailed comparative study of scholars so that points of similarity and distinction can be identified.

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Is there an Indian Modern Dance?

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

Uday Shankar's advent on the stage three decades ago was hailed as the beginning of a new era in Indian dance. The form he presented was termed "Modern Dance" as opposed to the several classical and folk styles which could be found in India. Since then others, both rising dancers and critics have often talked about the Modern Indian. But what is "Modern Indian Dance"? How can it be defined? How does one distinguish it from the old traditional forms on the one hand and the practice of the contemporary classical styles on the other? How and in what manner did or does the "Modem Dance" share the concepts of Modernity so evident in the other forms in India, for example, sculpture, painting, poetry? In what manner was a new vocabulary of movement evolved so that it could express the needs and desires of the modern man and how was this movement directly related to contemporary experience and environment of the modern Indian?

These and many more questions arise in one's mind in the con text of modern Indian dance. In modern literature, in painting and in sculpture, definitions can be found, even if with some difficulty. Modern literature did break away from the traditional culture pattern both in content and form if we analyse it with reference to social system, the value system and the accepted world view. Generally speaking, the discarding of the principle of 'negation of conflict' in literature led to the evolution of modern fiction, drama and poetry.

The use of the social environment as a theme and the emphasis on the individual in relation to inner and outer milieu gave birth to many new forms

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and styles which can be clearly distinguished from both classical and traditional forms. In painting the breakaway was even more self-conscious, although more recent in point of time. The discarding of the principle of illustrating the word and the rejection of a definite theme gave rise to new expressions. The revivalist's schools were also consciously rejected by the modern painter; in technique he no longer would adhere to the classical principles of the six limbs of painting (*Chitrakala*) and could no longer paint symbolically to evoke a cohesive *rasa.* His attitude to line, plane, and texture changed and there is today a distinct modern movement. In sculpture, the breakaway is once again discernible in the rejection of the principle of the *sutra* and *bhanga.* The modern sculptor experimented with mass in relation to space: the sculptor like the painter moved away from the portrayal of types, to the creations of form with an intrinsic significance, i.e. significance not based on literary allusion or symbolism. In music the little that can be called modern Indian music as distinct from contemporary classical music, explored the possibilities of departures from the principle of *raga* and *tala.*

What happened in dance? How did it or does it break away from the traditional styles and how can it be distinguished?

In order to understand this, one must even at the risk of making some generalisations, state the fundamental common hypothesis of the classical styles. The primacy of literature is recognised, the word is illustrated through a known pose–a known gesture; traditional mythology forms the content: the objective is to evoke a cohesive harmonious state of being–a mood. In technique each of the styles stresses the significant pose: these are strung together in a metrical cycle to emphasise and re-inforce a point of timelessness in space.

The human form achieves geometrical shapes in time rather than space, for the intricacy of the portions of dance (*nrtta*) lies in the very fine and deliberate manipulation of rhythm to achieve a series of poses. In the mime portions the meaning of the gesture is all important. The human body as an instrument used to establish the relationship between the pull of gravity and the space around. Thus there is no emphasis on covering space through releases from the ground. Since the dancer is not an individual expressing personal feelings or reactions, movement is stylised in a given framework where geometrical design with a repeated motif is important. As in the modal system of music, classical styles of India forbid the use of certain muscles and articulation at certain points in each of the styles. The dancer deliberately imposes a limitation both in terms of

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motor movements of the body and in terms of floor space on the stage. Choreographical design is limited; its richness lies in the symbolically significant use of all permutations and combinations in that self-imposed limitation both of body movement and its relation to space and themetrical cycle (time).

Did Uday Shankar break away from these principles known as *nrtta* and *abhinaya?* Did his followers do so? And, did they achieve an individual style?

Shankar's Achievement

It is a known fact that when Uday Shankar came into contact with Anna Pavlova, he was unaware of the vast hidden treasures of the classical styles in India. On account of his association with a different concept of movement, of space-time relationship he had learnt to look with different eyes at his own tradition. He was not as conscious as Isadora Duncan or other modern dancers of Europe, of having liberated movement from classical form, but he had learnt to look at movement analytically, critically outside the prescribed walls of the word-movement-relationship and the metrical-cycle-movement relationship.

In a word, the place of movement in dance had changed. With his association with artists of the West and his undoubted creativity he began to compose dances based on different assumptions. This also gave him even after his first loud experience of the classical styles the courage to "mix styles" as it is said. He was looking at movement without mimetic significance only: he was looking at dance as a form capable of expression without aid of 'gesture language'. The whole body could be used and all manner of complex relationships between different geometrical motifs, such as the rectangular of Kathakali, the figure of eight of Manipuri, and the triangle of Bharatanatyam could be established.

On another lane, since he was working at a time when India was acutely nationalistic and acutely conscious of the inroads of technology into traditional patterns of thought and behaviour, he created dances with contemporary themes. Creations such as "Labour and Machinery" and "Rhythm of Life" are outstanding examples.

It has to be noted that the change was not limited to dance movement, but was extended to a new relationship between music and dance. The dance movement was created first, and then music was provided as support or accompaniment. This was a reversal of the traditional pattern, where the dancer was interpreting or improvising on the musical word or note.

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Thus, Uday Shankar's association with Anna Pavlova led to two results: on the one hand he had made it possible to look at movement in Indian dance analytically and to use music to a dancer's purpose; on the other hand he had been made aware of an existing body of dance tradition, which presented a challenge to the artist and the innovator.

This was the point at which Uday Shankar and his troupe stood when the Almora culture centre was founded. The centre exposed the dancers to the overpowering technique of the classical styles; they realised that each of the techniques would require a life-time to master, they were taught the use of precise and intricate vocabulary of movement, gesture, and choreographical pattern. This had its advantages and its disadvantages. The technique in most cases became too deeply embedded in the persona of the dancer. Left to himself he could not resist the temptation of leaning easily and heavily on one or the other of the classical styles; creations of dance dramas by classical performers also proved an immediate challenge. The dance dramas were in any of the classical styles or sometimes a blend of two styles; the content was traditional and classical. The principles of *nrtta* and *abhinaya* of pure abstract dancing interspersed with mimetic acting to take the narrative forward were strictly followed. If there was a departure in composition it was only in presenting a variety to stage groupings through allied movements which were executed by different groups of dancers or different dancers. It was the known story through the known word, note and metrical cycle which was being interpreted.

The dancer lived in world insulated from contemporaniety; modern tension and conflicts were not his direct experience. There was no desire, no need to break from these norms; some dancers who attempted to be 'modern' by discarding traditional theme and content and the rich known music and metrical cycle were failures; they too succumbed to the neo-classical, the pseudo-classical but did not give birth to the 'modern idiom' in dance.

Creative Attempts

But what about creations like the "Ramayana" and the "Panchatantra" by the late Shanti Bardhan? Did they or did they not break ground and pave new paths? Yes, in the whole gamut of the modern dance creations in India one could single out these two ballets. They had the unmistakable mark of an individual style. In the one the choreographer had taken a well-known traditional theme but his break from the traditional treatment was both self-conscious and bold. In the "Ramayana" he moved from the traditional vocabulary of the

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gesture language to the extreme. Neither the face nor the hands, so important in the classical styles, were used. He used the mask andthe hands. He made it therefore impossible for himself to do which had been done in the classical styles. Movement had to be expressive through the use of the entire body. By restricting himself to the movements of the puppets executed by the human beings he gave the ballet a distinct style. Thus while this was an Indian creation with a definite Indian background it was new and very nearly modern.

In the "Panchatantra" he did something different. He explored the possibilities of movements of the body which may or may not be intrinsically aesthetic or beautiful. Many such movements can be identified in this ballet specially those of the crow and the mouse. They themselves could not be called dance movement but within the ballet they had been most successfully and usefully employed. This was the logical culmination of an analytical approach to dance movement. In the first portion of this ballet there was also evident an individual style not based on mimetic gesticulation. Some others have suceeded partially. But Shanti Bardhan was an exception and continues to remain so. These too cannot be called "Modern" in the Western sense of the term.

Dearth of Ideas

Few dancers in India have been moved to react to the immediate environment, to be aware of the changing relationships between him and space, and, between him and time. Most dancers have been content with the creation of an individual style within a classical form rather than the creation of an individual style in order to express their unique personality. Fewer still have exhibited a capacity to analyse human movement for its expressive quality. They have been perhaps afraid to experiment with movements other than those which emerged from the key points of articulation such as the neck, the shoulder joint and the knees and those which have already been chiselled through usage in the classical styles.

Contractions and releases, flexions and tensions, use of the human muscles specially the abdominal muscles, the relationship of the human body in relation directly to the floor, has not excited the dancer's imagination. No attempt at the release from gravity has been made; dancing remains for the most part vertical and is seen along the usual patterns of up and down, back and front, and a few diagonal stage designs. The principles of symmetry and asymmetry, of opposites and apposites, of succession and dynamics, have not been consciously and analytically used or exploited in what are termed as modern creations.

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In content, the dancer has continued to be content with taking traditional themes or adhering to a known piece of literature or poetry; emotions, subjective concerns of an individual, have not yet manifested themselves in dance creation. A few sociological themes were attempted by groups in the 1930s and 1940s, but these attempts have not been pursued. Except for the use of the "*Discovery of India*" as a frame within which historical tableau can be presented, no new themes have attracted dancers.

Although in what is known as modern dance, the dance is composed first and then the music is composed, the relationship is not "modern". The counts and beats have replaced mnemonics in abstract dancing and the melodic line has replaced sung poetry but there is no major departure from the earlier relationship. One may say that although the hypothesis had changed, "modern dance" as a movement is yet to flower in India.

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Performance: The Process, Manifestation and Experience

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

All ancient civilizations (and many contemporary societies of some parts of the world) organised space, established a physical centre, made enclosures and gave it a mythical and cosmic significance. This was a method of re-integration, of re-affirmation of the relationship of the micro-macro, terrestrial and celestial. For a specific time and duration, the circumscribed space was transmundane. The inner space of the heart (*hrdyakasa*) and the outer physical space (*bhutakasa*) were in communion. In relatively more permanent structures, this urge for communion manifests itself in habitations and monuments, whether individual or collective, sacred or secular. Pyramids, ziggurats, caves, stupas, temples, amphitheatres, cathedrals, etc. are an expression of consecrated space and thus are meant to lead Man to the experience of wholeness and totality, of what we call 'sacred space'. This experience is an inner silent contemplation, concentrated when energies converge or collect towards the centre; when all energies radiate outwards to the circumference differentiation is again lost. Also the individual merges in the cosmic through ritual congregation. The monumental is given new life through consecration rites called *prana pratistha.*

Monuments of ancient civilizations arrest time and through ritual at given intervals physical time and space become transmundane. The vedic *yajna* in India did the same in the making of the *sala* and the three fires. In the case of 'stupas', temples, mosques and churches, the hypothetical mythical centre of the Universe becomes the architectural centre (*garbhagrha or* navel) of the architectural plan. The superstructure is built around this centre. The seminar

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Akasa explored the concepts of Space as articulated in ancient and modern religion, art and architecture of different cultures and civilizations.

Ritual performance in many contemporary societies, ranging from the performances of Yourabas in Africa to the Hopi and Peublo Indians of USA to the Aborigines of Australia recreate cosmic time in circumscribed space. This is another articulation of the same urge to interrelate the inner and the outer.

In ritual performance also the beginning is the establishment of a centre–a *bindu*–a *nabhi* (navel). An enclosure is identified physically or conceptually. For that time and duration of the event (performance) it is consecrated space in circumscribed time. Terrestrial space is transformed to 'celestial space' and the 'microcosm' signifies the 'macrocosm'. Process and manifestation evoke an experience of the transindividual and personal. Examples of such events abound in many societies. In the Indian context there are many variations. Two significant illustrations were presented with a view to evoke the 'experience', at the seminar, with the following notes:

1. Manipuri Nata Sankirtana: Manipur is the home of many ancient forms of ritual music and dance. The *Nata Sankirtana* performed by the artists from Manipur is one amongst them.

The performance is held in a specially erected *mandapa* (enclosure). A centre is established: this represents the centre of the universe: a pillar, a bamboo tree trunk or banana tree is placed. This is the *axis mundi* uniting heaven and earth. It also signifies the *Kalpa Vriksa* (the wish tree). It also symbolises for the Vaisnava Bhakta Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Around it, is the enclosure (*mandapa*): there are eight pillars each representing the eight cardinal directions as also symbolises the eight *sakhis* for the *vaisnava* (Plate 1).

Though the performance is circular, the performing area is a square, facing the east. At the south-west corner sits the *Mandap Mapu* (usually an eminent Brahmin scholar) presiding over the Sankirtana. Near the middle pillar, at the western side facing east, sits the conch blower. A little further away from the performing area, at the north-west corner is the enclosure for the 'Arampham' (officiating priest) who looks after the whole ceremonial arrangement. He signifies *Bhagavati Purnamasi,* a *sakhi* who looks after the whole *Vraj Lila.*

Women are seated at the north and western side of the performing area while men occupy the south and eastern side.

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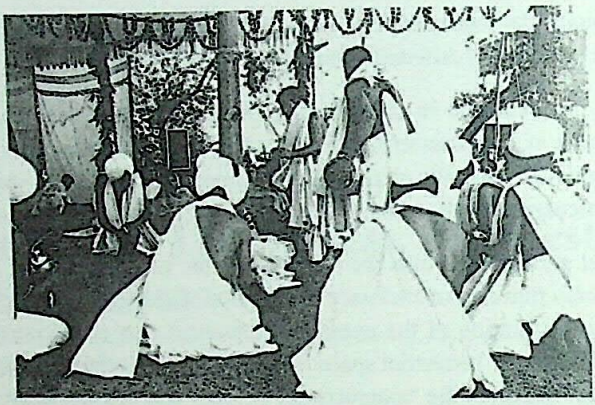

(Plate 1) The performance is held in a specially erected *mandapa*

(Plate 2) Before the *Sankirtana* starts the *Arampham* offers *dhoop, deep* and *chandan* (incense, light and sandal paste)

Any *Bhakta* wishing to make offering to the *Sankirtana* enters from the western side where there is an opening. Offerings made follow a strict routine of time and order, including the path taken inside the *Sankirtana mandapa.*

After the commencement of the *Sankirtana*, no member of the audience can enter nor leave the *mandapa.* For the duration of the performance it is sacred consecrated space.

Before the *Sankirtana* starts the *Arampham* offers *dhoop, deep* and *chandan* (incense, light and sandal paste) first to the central pillar i.e. the centre of the universe, then to the performers and then to the gathered *Bhaktas* (Plate 2).

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(Plate 3)Tanchup is a period of rest, peace and harmony after the ecstatic union

White clothes are offered to the performers; this signifies formal sanctification of the artists for the day.

For all those who take part in this event, this is the offering of the mortal to the pure flame of the immortal. A *Nata Sankirtana* performance normally is of five hours duration. It is divided into five sequentially structured sections. Normally there are sixteen male dancers, divided into two groups. The first is led by the main singer called Ishei Hanba. The second group is led by a respondent singer called Duhar. Two drummers are most important. The main drummer is called Pung Yeiba and the second Tung Inba. As soon as the officiating priest takes his seat space is transformed and consecrated. The first section is known as *Adhivasa.* The second section begins with the entry of two Pung players (*mridanga*) (Plate 4 & 5). The president of the assembly indicates the *raga* (melody) which will be sung and this marks the ritual metamorphosis of the performers into Sakhis (companions of Krsna). The third section begins with the chief singer (called Ishei Hanba) offering salutations to the Lord and the assembly. He and his assistants symbolise Lord Gourchandra. Special metrical compositions are played. The fourth section begins with the playing of a particular metrical pattern called *Rajamela.* It begins with slow measured rhythms and gradually culminates in a crescendo. This symbolises the union of Krsna and Radha. Of special significance are the choreographical patterns clockwise and anti-clockwise of the two groups: intricate choreographical patterns are formed. Questions are asked by one group and answered by the second. The leaders of the first group and the respondent singer carry on a dialogue through singing, drumming, dance, all invoking the evoking

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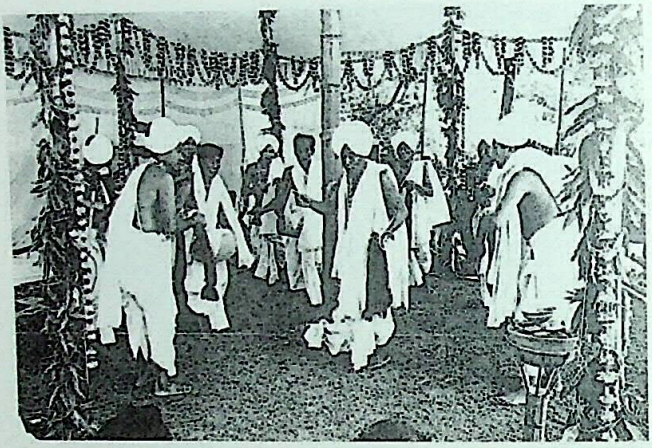

Plate 4

Plate 5

(Plates 4 & 5) The second section begins with the entry of two Pung players

Krsna. The next section is called Tanchup. This a period of rest, peace and harmony after the ecstatic union (Plate 3).

Manchup follows. Now is the flowering anew of life on earth. Thus the performers present through their drumming and dance the universe of plants, animals, birds, men and women i.e. all living matter. It is a total participation with complete dedication and merging of individual entities into a collective totality; differentiation is lost. The centre and periphery are in incessant dialogue, the one is many and the many one (Plates 6 & 7).The Ritual Art Space is consecrated, so is time made transcendental and the mood one of prayer and dedication.

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Plate 6

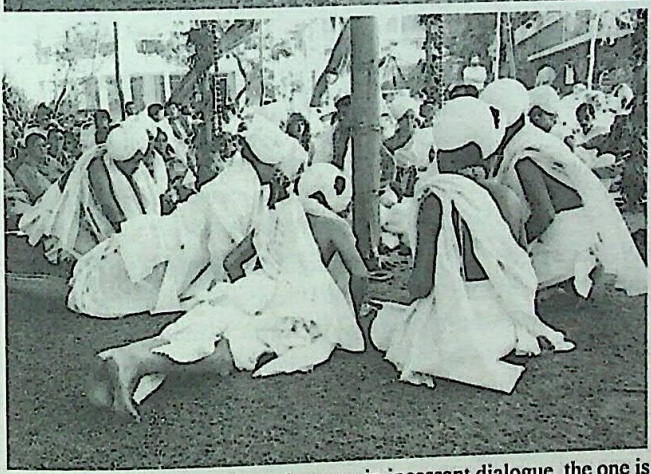

Plate 7

(Plates 6 & 7) The centre and periphery are in incessant dialogue, the one is many and the many one

The experience is of internal silence through the very process of external movement and congregation.

The Manipur Sankirtana is a micro-model of a near universal concept of ritual space and consecration.

II. Mudiyettu: Mudiyettu is an ancient ritualistic performance from Kerala. It is performed by the Marars and Kurups. In the traditional context, the event lasts nearly 20 hours. An abridged version was presented.

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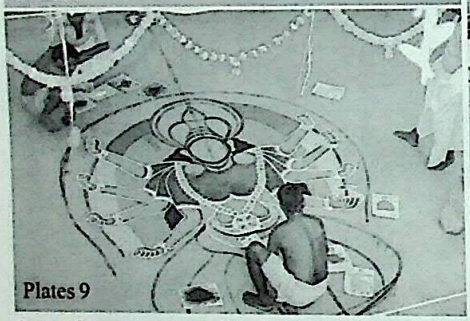
Plates 8



Plates 9

Plates 10

An enclosure or a mandapa is temporarily set up, a centre is established, a line is drawn (Plates 8 & 9).
The Kurup master brings to life, with amazing swiftness, a figure of *Bhadrakali* (Plate 10).

Tall trees, dark green shadows, the sunlight playing on fresh paddy fields, the meandering backwaters of Kerala are the landscape. Coconut and arecanut rise high above, connecting the heaven and the earth, standing as a symbol of the centre of the earth, the *axis mundi* and the *stambha* of mythologies of all ancient civilizations. An enclosure or a mandapa is temporarily set up, a centre is established, a line is drawn (Plates 8 & 9). The Kurup master, with a lightness of touch (through this one line and the centre), brings to life, with amazing swiftness, a figure of *Bhadrakali* (Plate 10 & 11). Quick strokes create the head, the torso, the open position of the lower limbs; semi-circles give the outline of the head, the torso, the arms and the legs. The outlines are first filled in with primary colours. Other colours are piled upon specific parts to provide volume to the figure. Turmeric, burnt coconut leaves for green and the darker hues for black, *kumkum* for red, and before your eyes rises the mighty figure of Bhadrakali (made up of all these colours and cereals) come to life. The icon on the ground is not unidimensional since the colours are piled one upon the other to define ornaments and the contours of the huge bust of *Bhadrakali*. The skirt made of *kumkum* and lime appears as a rich textured piece of tapestry. The anklets and the ornaments of silver or gold

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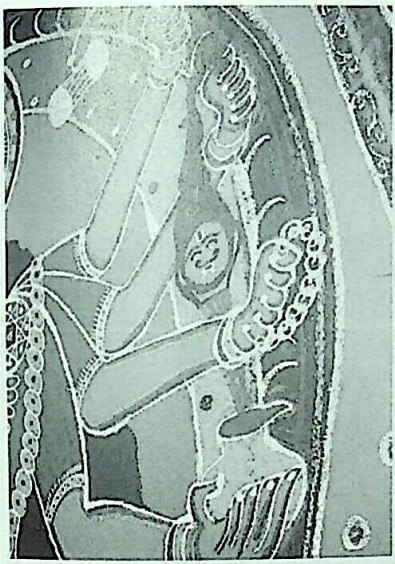

(Plate 11)The severed head of *Darika*

(Plate 12). There is no painting left, no image, only the idea and the light of a lamp, against a static icon

are perfect in design. In her eight arms, the deity holds the diverse weapons of her power. In one of these is the severed head of that demon of demons called *Darika* (Plate 12). The ritual of drawing the figure (nearly 12 sq ft) on the ground is conducted to the accompaniment of drumming and singing and is completed to synchronise with the rising crescendo of the drums. Once the image is completed, the Tantri (priest) sits to worship this goddess who is his creation. The idea, given 'form', is brought to life through the *mantras* and the recitations of the Tantri. The lamp, which had been lit in the beginning, is continually filled with oil. It is the symbol of the beginning and of the consecrated circle reconstructing mythical time. The Tantri continues his recitation, the drumming becomes louder and gradually a dance begins, not in and around the figure but over the figure. In wild frenzy, almost as if possessed by the possessed by the spirit of the goddess, the Tantri now moves first carefully and then madly over the entire figure. In a trance the figure is desecrated. There is no painting left, no image, only the idea and the light of a lamp, against a static icon (Plate 13).

The idea comes to life through concrete form and the form returns to the formless in the first phase. But 'energy' released is symbolised in the lighted lamp which is carried to the second arena of the actual performance. Now it is

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Clockwise from top left : Plate 14, 15, 16 & 17
At the level of myth it underscores the eternal theme of power & its limitations. Darika is vanquished by Kali.

the Marars and not the Kurups who perform the drama. The singing, the recitation to the performance is the ritual enactment of the myth of the killing of the Asura Darika by Kali. As is common in most myths in India relating to power, its limitations and its destructiveness, here, too, the story revolves around the demon who had sought boons from Siva. The demon's austerities and meditation had made him the recipient of these boons. Naturally, 'immortality' was the boon that Darika wanted. He asked, "So, no man should kill me, but of woman I am not afraid; it would be demeaning to ask the Lord for a boon to be saved from a woman." Siva gave the boon, a double edged instrument of power and fear. So the demon went on to amass power, challenging his enemies in all the directions of the world. He was torn by anxieties regarding unknown enemies, who might come forward to fight him: he killed and destroyed indiscriminatingly intoxicated with power, anxious with fear.

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Cosmic balances are disturbed. The gods plead before Siva. A Nandi head emerges from top of a half-curtain to reassure them. Thereafter the entry of Darika through the audience, with *mashals* (torches) lighting up his demon-like face, painted with the same texture and colours as that of the image, is spectacular and dramatic. He emerges as if from the primeval forces of the environment, the lush trees, the tall forests, the shadows of the coconuts and now, instead of the sun, the moon shimmers through the leaves. Darika runs in different quarters, eager to hear the cries of enemies, but he can hear no shouts, except the echoes of his own voice. Then comes a voice, from the mountains and the forests, a voice he does not recognise, a voice feeble and feminine, distant but sharp. This is the voice of the woman–Kali, who challenges the demon. The inevitable happens. Darika, though not afraid of women, now remembers that Siva's boon will save him from male but not female foes. He is afraid. Even so, confident of his power, he appears to vanquish Kali. But this is temporary; she is revived and then begins the dance of this powerful energy who crushes the desire for power. As theatrical spectacle, the performance is tightly structured with exits, entries, diagonals, crossings, use of spatial areas, freezing, pauses and blockings. At the level of myth it underscores the eternal theme of power & its limitations (Plate 14, 15, 16 & 17).

Darika is vanquished by Kali but not without a heroic battle being fought. This battle presents the confrontation of not only good and evil but also that of desire for power and its limitations. Diverse theatrical media of expression are used, ranging from the recited words to the sung word, from a system of questions and answers to singing and drumming. This is further supported by large leaps on the ground and in the air, dramatic exits and entries and a fairly developed vocabulary of movement. Most impressive is the transformation of the face through the mask-like make-up. The headgears, made of bamboo and coconut, lend an aura of mystery. It is as if the coconut grove comes to life through these mythical figures. Mudiyettu culminates in a moment of trance when the actor, who plays the role of Kali, is possessed with this divine power of the goddess.

Cosmic balances are restored; from the 'chaos' a new order emerges. Pure water is sprinkled and to the 'music' of aerophonic instruments, a new dawn–physical and psychical–is ushered. Consecrated space returns to 'mundane space' but not without being electrically charged with explosion of energies of the night before.

In both cases, the consecration of space in circumscribed time is the strategy for communion of the physical and metaphysical, human and mythical, specific and universal, micro and macro.

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Note: The above is an inadequate verbal description of performances of two groups presented on the occasion of the *Akasa* seminar. No attempt is being made here for an 'analytical', historical and sociological analysis of these forms. The aim at the seminar was to present the process, manifestation and experience of a performance which transforms mundane space to consecrated space in fixed time and duration.

The following information from Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts would be relevant in the context of the above article–Editor.

Stretching over a span of six-years, IGNCA explored a series of fundamental themes which transcend cultures, periods of history, disciplines and linguistic barriers. These themes which dwelt on many dimensions and perceptions at the interior and exterior levels of experience and manifestation were expressed through multi-media projections and linked to multi-disciplinary seminars.

Theme	Exhibition	Seminar
Kham (Space) 1986	Explored the many dimensions and levels of Space	Explored the multi-dimensional & cross cultural perception of Space
Akara (Form) 1988	Dealt with the relationship between the unarticulated silent sound, the articulated word and the written word. The exhibition also projected the art of writing as script and calligraphy from diverse cultures.	Focused on the relationship of sound & writing, manual and technological skills, the language of form in iconography and calligraphy.
Kala (Time)	Explored the many dimensions of Time, as thought, expression and experience, objective and subjective, and man's perception of it.	Dwelt on every aspect of Time, reaffirming the notion of universality of Time.
Prakriti (Nature and Man) 1992	Sought to provide an integral vision of the symbiotic relationship between man and nature	Dealt essentially with reflections on nature with reference to the basic elements that constitute man and the universe, from both the traditional and the modern perspectives.

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The Tradition of the Performing Arts

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

A mention of the performing arts of Asia, and particularly of India, immediately brings to one's mind the single-bodied and many-armed image of Durga or Siva in his form as Nataraja, ever destroying, ever creating new forms of the dance *Tandava*. These symbols in plastic form signify at one level the unified equilibrium, the still-centre, and at the other the continual play of "energy" and rhythm in multiple plural forms. The two aspects are inter-connected and mutually dependent. The varied art forms, like the multiple arms and hands, though distinct and separate, are all limbs of the same body: the seeming heterogeneity and multiplicity are the different modes of the *Tandava*.

And yet it is impossible to speak of the one monolithic tradition of communication through the arts, particularly the performing arts in Asia or India, or for that matter exclusively of forms which depend on verbal or non-verbal communication.

There are traditions of the performing arts, in this geographical area and not a tradition: all are characterised by a staggering multiplicity of genres, form styles and techniques. Even the contemporary scene belies all classification in terms of the clearly-defined categories of western performing arts, namely into classical and folk, sophisticated, self-conscious, individual, artistic creation and popular collective activity; into spoken drama based on the word, musical notes or gestures or movement. Neither can they be classified into the neat categories of opera, operetta, symphony or chamber orchestra. Further, the insulation amongst different categories, so characteristic of western forms until the twentieth century,

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has been absent here from times immemorial. Will you call this the great tradition of Total Theatre or Oral Tradition or something else?

In spite of these complexities and the apparent picture of an eternal timelessness, which is repetitive, a close look reveals that each of these traditions (as prevalent in different regions of the continent and at different levels of society) can be clearly identified both in terms of the evolution of artistic form and style in time and its socio-cultural milieu in space. Layers of different moments of time can also be identified in a seemingly contemporary form. Characteristic of the cultural pattern within which the performing arts traditions flourished is a highly abstract approach at one level, an abstraction, (which guides the spirit of these forms and provides a fundamental unity or continuity and a sense of the timeless) and on the other hand an equal preoccupation with multiple concrete varied forms which accounts for change and continual flux.

Although it would be hazardous and difficult to provide an explanation for this seemingly contradictory phenomenon of simultaneous static equilibrium, change and dynamism, it would be worthwhile to identify the underlying principles of 'commonalty' or call it universality of the cultural traditions of Asia, and particularly of the performing arts of Asia with special reference to India.

In order to arrive at some conceptual hypothesis it might be necessary to mention briefly the spatial and temporal situation of these arts.

The spatial situation can be seen both in terms of levels of society and the nature of performance. It can also be seen in terms of the geographical distribution of the different racial/ ethnic linguistic groups.

In purely anthropological terms the levels are tribal, village and urban; in artistic terminology they are sometimes called folk (or community or participative) and solo (or individual-artist-based, thus called classical). Although this is never explicitly stated, folk implies tribal/village group–community while classical implies urban, sophisticated, stylised and individual/solo. Thes implied correlatives have been the cause of much misunderstanding regarding Asian or Indian arts. We shall presently examine the nature of such misunderstanding.

Nevertheless, let us begin only with a brief account of the tribal belt in India. A pervasive tribal belt passes through all parts of India: the dances of these

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groups can be classified on the basis of anthropological, ethnological, racial types. Nearly fifteen million people of India belong to this category: their dance and music provides vigour and vitality to folk and classical styles.

There is the Himalayan belt from Kashmir to Himachal Pradesh, extending to the eastern hills of Bhutan, Sikkim, Manipur, Assam, Mizoram. Amongst these are distinct tribal groups, ranging from the Gujers to the Bakerwals, and finally ending in the many tribal groups generally known as the Nagas. Chief amongst these are the Zeliangs, the Kukis, the Mizos, the Daflas, Semas, and the Aos.

Another tribal belt can be discerned at the foot-hills of the Himalayas one merging into the great plains encompassed by the rivers Jamuna and Ganga. Amongst the tribes of the foot-hills and great plateaus, there are several which can be grouped together on account of their social structuring or their life-styles. Again sub-groupings are possible: the tribes of the deserts and the plateaus of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh form one macro-group, while others belong to the other racial strands such as Oraons, Hos, Marias and Santhals. There are then the tribes which inhabit the plateaus and the sea-shores south of the Vindhyas. Amongst these are some of our most ancient and primitive tribes, such as the Todas, the Banjaras, the Venedis, etc.

An analysis of the music and dance of these fifteen or twenty million people leads us to the conclusion that these tribes make little or no distinction between verbal and non-verbal communication systems and techniques. Expression is total. When individual, it may be free, but in groups it is mostly conditioned movement or sound directly related to life function and experience, that is to the hunt or other activity. Songs or dances are a form of participative activity, but not spontaneous in the sense of allowing free movement. These artistic forms are, like tribal society itself, highly structured.

Next is the stage of the food-gatherers, with shift cultivation and with a variety of magical, fertility rites: here the immediacy of life experience is recalled in sound rhythm and movement. Dramatic action appears for the first time; naturally the spoken word and gestures assume a definite position. The fertility rites connected with the earth, sun and moon play a very important role here. The artistic form is conditioned not so much by the structuring of the tribal society as among the Daflas, the Aos, Marias, Hos and Oraons, but by the functions of the rite. All the pole dances of India belong to this category. The beginnings of procession, music and dance can also be traced back to the rites of the *Jhum* cultivators.

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There is then the organized village society, whose history can be traced back to the Vedic concept of the *grama.* This is the organisational pattern in which eighty percent of the population of this country and perhaps of some other parts of Asia has lived and continues to live. These villages have been analysed from many points of view, both historical and sociological. Here music and dance has been woven into agricultural functions and is integrated with the daily and annual routine of the peasant. Many survivals and continuities of tribal society can be discerned in the agricultural rites connected with sowing, reaping and harvesting. These, along with many dances of propitiation, of magic and sorcery, can be traced back to an unknown antiquity. Thus a contemporary social community dance often contains in it elements of the original tribal or primitive function. Garba and Bhangra are typical instances.

Co-existent with the manifestations which are integral to the agricultural routine of the life of the peasant are artistic manifestations which are based on the two epics and the many Puranas of Buddhist, Jain and Hindu origin. For all of Asia there are these epics, then the Jatakas and also their own indigenous literature. The many pageants and tableaux and 'changing-locale forms' of dances and dance-drama developed from both the pure recitative word and its interpretation through gesture, mime and song. The local interpretation of the epics has been often considered as the permeation by the Great Tradition of the Little. However, it is often forgotten that these local or regional forms in turn shaped later the literary versions of the epics. A history of the development of the Rama theme will make this amply clear.

Close to the village community, but a class apart is a group of professional singers, dancers, musicians, actor, differently classified as *Bhands, Nats, Gandharvas, Vairagis,* and *Binkaras.* We find them all over India and even in some parts of Asia. This was and is, a group for whom the performance was vocation, and not just a social, tribal or agricultural function. They were in and yet out of society. They were 'mobile'; they moved from place to place. It is this group of people which has been responsible for the mobility of ideas, forms and styles between village and urban centres. They have also been the vehicles expressing, protest, dissent and reform; they have been the carriers of reform movements and the articulators of satire, social comment and thus they served as instruments of change. Contemporary forms such as the Bhavai, Nautanki, Therukoothu, Othanthulal belong to this group. In artistic form, their technique ranges from acrobatics to pure spoken drama. The word-gesture relationship is, however, minimal. Of late these forms have been termed folk-drama, traditional

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theatre, even street theatre and folk dance. The essence of these forms, ranging from singing, puppetry, acrobatics, dance, and theatre lies in the social sanction given to their freedom and liberty they enjoy to make social comment. It is this which links them together.

There is finally urban culture, not necessarily modern, but city-based; it has grown out of the tribal/village culture and has, in turn, affected it. Forms, which developed within the framework of a strict social organisation and agricultural and other life-functions, are carried forward, taken over to the urban milieu; but this is done through a dissociation of the original function, or the integral relationship with the rigorous social structuring. Into the old form is instilled, added, admixed, superimposed, at will, a new literary content and a musical score. Classicity is the result. A mannerism and stylization is achieved through chiselling the earlier forms and structuring them in relation to word and sound. This, then was the secret of those highly esoteric arts which did not lose their links with the earth and thus in them the potential of continued rejuvenation, death and renewal with marked rhythmic pattern of continuity and change.

At this level, those same epics, then the Puranas and the tales received a different treatment. The performers were professional or non-professional in terms of economic vocation but they were all dedicated academicians committed to the arts as a discipline of life and thus of Release.

This multi-layered, multi-levelled pattern can be discerned in practically in every region of India and in many parts of Asia, particularly Java, Bali and some parts of Thailand and Burma.

Where then lies the distinction between strictly folk and classical forms? Can one postulate or arrive at a summing up on the basis of this descriptive survey? Perhaps it is hazardous, but worthwhile. It is an obvious but often not sufficiently understood situation.

Roughly it may be stated thus. The arts developed within the framework of a local or regional distinctiveness, one which cuts across socio-economic stratification. One notices a dialogue and interaction between levels and often much overlapping. The *movement is* a two-way movement and not just the penetration of Great Art into popular levels. There is also a clearly identifiable pattern of communication among regions at particular levels. Thus there are two broad patterns: one a vertical oblong movement amongst forms of a particular region at different levels and socio-economic groupings and a horizontal

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spatial movement amongst regions where themes, content and forms have developed within a framework of continual communication at particular levels.

It will, nevertheless, be possible to identify contemporary artistic manifestation into tribal, village, semi-professional and urban and delineate the paths of communication and interaction amongst the tribal, village or urban forms of different regions and between the tribal, village and sophisticated forms within a region. Merely as an illustration, one might mention here that forms in Orissa, Manipur, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh provide an excellent opportunity for such an analysis. There is, for example, a connection between the forms of the tribals of Ganjam district; the Paiks, the dancers of Mayurbhanj; the performers of the Jatra, the Gotipuas of the Akharas and, the Maharis of the temples in Orissa. Channels of communication between the Kali dances, those of the Devi cult, the Theyiattam, Koodiyattam, Kathakali can also be discerned. Alongside are the elements of commonalty, universality amongst sophisticated forms of dance, such as Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Kathak, and Manipuri, belonging to different regions of India.

This spatial situation has to be supplemented with a historical, temporal perspective where we see that the traditions for the plastic arts grew within a framework of inter-connection and inter-dependence as a self-conscious awareness and principle and not mere chance. While the Mohanjodaro civilization was an urban civilization, the Rigvedic society was pastoral and nomadic, with many inbuilt systems of social cohesiveness and mobility. The *Saman* was the meeting place of all. By the time of the Yajurveda, magic rituals, gestures and the symbolic use of the body assumed importance. In the Samaveda, the concept of the *Margi* and *Desi* tells us of the acceptance levels. After the Vedic, both Vedantic and philosophic tradition and the Brahmanical, ritual tradition gave rise to unified abstraction in spirit and symbolic concretisation in form.

In aesthetics, this framework of the arts was recognised and articulated by the mythical Indian theoreticians, Bharata in a period as early as the second century B.C. to the second century A.D. He conceived of the theatrical spectacle as a total amalgam of all media and genres ranging from spoken to sound music, vocal to instrumental, gestures, mime, decor and costumes and the inner state of being. He recognised these two levels of performance in the concept of naturalistic (*Loke-real*) and stylized conventions (*Natya*) of the stage. He saw style as a mode of presentation ranging from the grand, the verbal, to the lyrical, the introspective. He also recognised the emergence of the regional variants in the concepts of the *pravartti*.

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It is thus understandable that the codifier of the *Natya Shastra* should begin his treatise by stating that he had created a fifth Veda by taking words from the Rigveda, music from the Samaveda, gestures from the Yajurveda and involuntary states from the Atharvaveda. In asserting that this would be a discipline, an art unrestricted for all classes and groups of society, he indicated the capacity of the arts to cut across all hierarchical stratification.

This and other formulations on the arts ranging from the second to the tenth century continue to subscribe to a world view which accepts the phenomena of the unity of a well-defined goal, a multiplicity of content operating in a framework of the inter-dependence of forms and styles between levels and regions. For the theoretician and the practising artist, both the unity and the fluidity principle were both an unquestioned, fundamental conceptual hypothesis as also a practical reality.

In course of time, while the sophisticated forms emerged as highly stylised individual styles, alongside there grew a variety of forms and styles, local and regional in character. These came to be termed as the *Desi* forms. So prevalent and pervasive and powerful must have been the impact of these genres that the theoreticians and codifiers of the period between the tenth and thirteenth century included in their treatises a whole new category of artistic forms known as *Desi*. The *Desi ragas*, the *Desi Karanas*, the *Desi* forms of literature and painting all found a full and candid discussion in the rexts of the period. A perusal of these texts convinces us beyond doubt of the strength and validity of the principles of a tradition enunciated initially in the context of religion and conduct. These are the concepts of the *Shastra-chara* and *Loka-chara*. The theoriser and codifier of the arts not only took note of popular developments but also gave them a theoretical and academic sanction. For this he had precedents and models in the sphere of religion, philosophy and codes of conduct.

These varied traditions had thus an inbuilt mechanism of acceptance of 'change', of variety, of modification within a well-defined system of the eternal timelessness and unity. The ever changing dynamic, innovative growth and development was complementary in conflict and counter opposition. Tradition and contemporaneity, static equilibrium and dynamic change acquire a totally different meaning in this context. The one God assuming different forms: the one Goddess with multiple arms was the natural symbolic manifestation of such a world view.

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The artistic forms in the Asian continent are an excellent indicator of this vision and must be studied against this background instead of against a background of continual annihilation of earlier forms and their replacement by newer forms in a linear order. A natural corollary of the above was a deliberate attempt to break the insularity amongst the different art-forms depending, in the main, on the word, on sound, gestures, mime, mass, volume, line and colour.

By the sixth century A.D. this was such an accepted axiom that the *Vishnudharmottarapurana* embodies the principles through the story of a dialogue between a sage and a king. The king is taken through successive disciplines of rhythm, music, vocal and instrumental movement before he is considered fit to create images for worship. An analysis of any one act or any particular genre is thus only a study of a pair of arms or one particular aspect of the god and not totality itself. Despite this integrated approach there is the recognition of the autonomy of particular media and each is dealt with separately.

While, therefore, it would be merely a partial exercise to analyse genres only in terms of their dependence on the word or sound or movement in isolation, it would at the same time be possible to cull out these elements against the background of the inter-dependence and inter-connections of forms within a region and amongst regions.

It would also be possible to discuss the different characteristics in both time and space of forms, which depended primarily on the body as a vehicle of communication as distinct from those which depended on that word. The word *Vak* was, nevertheless, primary at all levels and the oral tradition provided the basis of communication even when the word communicated not as a visual written experience but as an aural (heard) experience.

How do we identify these forms in different regions and at different levels in India and what are their chief characteristics? At the tribal level, style is evolved through emphasis on particular parts of the body, with particular limbs as macro-movement. This is unrelated to the word, but certainly related to life-functions. The artistic form is governed by single units of rhythm used repetitively. Thus while some tribal dances use the leg as a single unit, others use it as broken up into the movements of the thigh and the calf. While solo dancing may have an element of spontaneity, group dances are conditioned and delimited and it is this self-conscious delimitation which accounts for style and mannerism.

We can distinguish Nagas from the Marias and the Hos on account of these varied delimiting mannerism and repetition of the movements where only some

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parts of the body and not all are articulated. At the village level the micro-movement of the hand-and-foot contacts begins to play a part. In the fertility rite dances, trance and magic play an important part. In some, many more parts of the body, with micro-movements, begin to play a part. The human body is also used symbolically and, in doing so, the aim is to arrive at an abstract design in space.

Music is more often than not an indispensable ingredient and is not restricted to singing by the dancers. A separate group of reciters and vocalists accompanies the dancers. The relationship between the word and the movement is loose, not tightly structured. The thematic aspects of these dance-songs range from fertility to agricultural functions, and to the presentation of stories from the epics.

When we move on to the community, professional, semi-professional theatre of the village street or court, we find that the relationship of word gesture has undergone a transformation.

Now the relationship is much more rigorous: the theatrical spectacle depends on the spoken or sung word and its multiple interpretation through movement. The Ramalila and the Rasalila performances all over India are an example of this phenomenon. So also are dance-drama forms like Kathakali, Yakshagana, Bhama Kalapam. The opposite pole in street theatre are acrobatic dances which have no meaning or word-content and depend for communication on pure body skill.

The word-gesture relationship changes in sophisticated solo forms. Here the literary word is set to melodic line, a given metrical cycle and is then interpreted either descriptively or symbolically by the dancer. The styles commonly termed as 'classical' in the context of dance all use this principle: however, each can be distinguished from the other through a distinctive use of the human body as abstract design. Different geometrical motifs guide their articulation techniques.

Thus, the sophisticated or stylised forms which continue to be deeply rooted in village and folk culture evolved a methodology of communication which is strictly regional at one level and at another level universal on account of its abstraction. Examples of the pattern of evolution can be cited from all parts of India but particularly from regions like Orissa, Manipur, Kerala, where a different layering and levelling of society still exists and is clearly identifiable.

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One common principle which determines the nature of movement at both the village and the urban sophisticated level is the use of the human as an impersonal instrument or vehicle of communication. Expression lies not in spontaneous free movement, but in achieving impersonality through the very personal medium of the body. Indeed, it is this one major which gives the Asian dance and dance-drama forms a quality which distinguishes them from other cultures.

How and when the Indian considered the body as an essential prerequisite for transcending the body is the total history of Indian thought. This is neither the occasion nor will there be enough time to go into the complexities of these thought processes as they manifest themselves in Indian artistic traditions, and particularly those which relate to the use of human form for communication either in the plastic medium or the kinetic medium. The theoretical enunciation of this thought pattern was made by the early Indian aesthetician in the formulation of the *Rasa* theory which has guided the destiny of Indian art forms for nearly eighteen centuries. Scholars have dwelt at great length on different aspects of the aesthetic experience, the aesthetic content and the methods of communication contained in this theory. We shall not go into these aspects here. However, let us end by merely drawing attention to one single principle in this aesthetic, which allowed for improvisation, innovation and change.

This was the principle of *Vyabhichari bhava* or what is commonly called *Sanchari bhava* in music and dance. Through the *Vyabhichari bhava* or *Sanchari bhava,* he could interpret the permanent or the dominant state (*Sthayi bhava*) in as many ways as he liked and show the picture of the world with his own particular view point without departing from the overall structure of the aesthetic theory.

The principle of eternity, of timelessness, and of flux, of an ever changing in old and ever new or renew phenomena was inbuilt in thought at its most metaphysical levels and not at its most popular and common levels. This then is the pattern of the Indian performing arts. They can be the vehicle of any contemporary concern, but the contemporaneity must be contained within the continual reminder of the unseen, but very rare unity and eternity which underlies all phenomena.

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Manifestations of Shiva and Discourses on Shiva

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

The exhibition *Manifestations of Shiva* and the symposium *Discourses on Shiva: Nature of Religious Imagery,* held in Philadelphia in April-May 1981,were events of great importance, both as scholarly achievement and as a new step in Indo-U. S. cultural relations.

The exhibition was the culmination of the life-long pursuit of a subject by Stella Kramrisch, one of the world's greatest living historians of Indian art. Her journey encompassing Indian art and her contribution in the field is as important as that of Ananda Coomaraswamy and Vasudeva Sarana Agrawala. Amongst the pioneers, it was these three scholars who were mainly responsible for a body of work on different facets of Indian art which cumulatively stands for a distinctive point of view with a conceptual base. Others, particularly (Niharranjan Ray, Moti Chandra and Karl Khandalawala, belong to yet another category of scholars responsible for bringing new material to the forefront and clarifying many issues of foreign influences, assimilations, social significance and chronologies. C.Sivaramamurti stands in a class by himself, both in respect of iconographical studies and interpretative work. In the field of iconography today, he has no equal and he towers head and shoulders above the rest.

In Philadelphia, Stella Kramrisch and C.Sivaramamurti met both physically in space and on an intellectual plane. For this rare opportunity to be a spectator and witness to the meeting of two great minds. One was immeasurably grateful. Of course, one missed the presence of Niharranjan Ray for he would have provided a foil to these two scholars.

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The exhibition was thematically arranged, with a very clearly conceived plan and discerning selection of 200 examples from collections in the U.S., U.K., Europe and India. The sheer artistic excellence of the paintings, stone sculptures and bronzes was a treat for the eye, and made even more meaningful through a dramatic and sensitive presentation. This was Stella Kamrisch's statement on Shiva, articulated verbally in the catalogue and in her book *The Presence of Shiva* and visually supported in concrete terms through the exhibition. The uncreated, the unmanifested, was manifested through the principle of bi-unity, and, of the one and the many, and finally the triad is her theme. The power of concentration, of restraint, and control at the very moment of creation is Stella Kramrisch's preoccupation. The holding and disbursal of the seed, her identification of the cosmic paradox, its manifestation through the complementary images of Shiva and Shakti, of the Yogi Shiva watching his own states as *Bhairava, Bhikshatana,* and *Aghor,* is the glory and joy of Stella Kramrisch herself reliving her theme at a heightened level of consciousness. Behind the great diversity of the manifestations of Shiva as *Lingam, Chaturmukha, Ardhanarishvara, Yogi* and *Nataraja* was a central image unseen but dominant in her vision. It was the Trimurti of Elephanta as was apparent to any sensitive observer of the exhibition. Stella Kramrisch confronting the image physically in Elephanta was a turning point in her career and she describes the experience vividly. This was her first entry into India in time and her first entry into the realm of the Indian spirit. That first day's experience in Bombay in the twenties of this century cumulatively flowered into the exhibition, the magnificent catalogue, thebook, *The Presence of Shiva,* and the first two introductory lectures on the Shiva at Elephanta with which, appropriately enough, this *Yajna* on Shiva opened in Philadelphia. Elsewhere I have described Stella Kramrisch's conception and visualization as also the experience of going with her through the exhibition during and after the installation. Almost of equal significance was the visit to the exhibition with Stella Kramrisch and C. Sivaramamurti together and with the latter singly.

In a flash, one saw that while Stella Kramrisch's mind and spirit travelled to the fundamental abstract concepts and the emergence of the manifestation as *Ardhanarishvara, Yogi, Bhairava, Nataraja, Tripurantaka, Somasundara* with the *Devi,* for C.Sivaramamurti it triggered off *shloka* after *shloka* from Sanskrit literature. His monumental memory is a unique personal retrieval system and it was a fascinating and moving experience to hear the verses of Kalidasa, Ratnakara and other poets come alive through the images. He narrated story after story of the *Lingodbhava,* the *Ardhanarishvara,* recited the verses of the saints on the bull *Nandi* (who is none other than the ego of Shiva), cited

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Figure 1: Shiva, King of Dancers, Chola Dynasty, Tamil Nadu. 10th century Bronze, height 30" Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

references to the dalliance of Shiva and Parvati, their all too understandable domestic quarrels and tensions as seen in the Pahari paintings and Chalukyan images, the portrayal of Kartikeya in *Kumarasambhavam* and, above all, to the descriptions of the dance of Shiva. Stella Kramrisch and C.Sivaramamurti moved amongst the magnificent bronzes drawn from Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir and South India, as they would amongst family members. They seemed to whisper secrets to each and to the images. A special communication through stance, posture and glance was evident. This was a gift for those who had the sensitivity to see, hear, absorb, and respond.

On the discussion table, the theme came alive in another dimension. Michael Meister's tightly structured symposium schedule sometimes did give way under the pressure of physical time or the over-zealousness of a few participants trying to smother listeners with information, but the interest in the theme or the level of discussion never flagged. A rich array of Indian and Western scholarship

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was represented. There were the archaeologists (Debala Mitra, U. P. Shah, R. Nagaswamy, Krishna Deva, K. V.Soundara Rajan and H. Sarkar amongst the Indians, and Doris Chatham and Odile Divakaran amongst the Westerners),who have spent a life-time on particular forms of Shiva. There were others like M. Dhaky and Michael Meister who have specialized on Shiva monuments. Besides, there was a fair representation of younger scholars such as Devangana Desai, Thomas Maxwell and others. There were also literary scholars such as Ludo Rocher, A. K.Ramanujan, Barbara Stoler Miller, and Wendy O' Flaherty. Walter Spink, Pratapaditya Pal, and Pramod Chandra were among the others who participated in the symposium. Above all there was the presence of Stella Kramrisch and of C.Sivaramamurti, quiet, listening and, only occasionally and most meaningfully, intervening to clarify a point or make a statement. Besides, amongst the participants and discussants were many lively alert minds from the disciplines of anthropology (Arjun Appadurai) and of Near Eastern Art and Archaeology (Irene Winters) and cultural historians (Pupul Jayakar from India).

The symposium began with the Shiva monuments and a very rich and closely documented paper by Michael Meister on Shiva Forts in Central India. Through the paper and the line drawings and analysis, Micheal Meister convincingly presented his case for the geometric configuration of the Shiva temples in the ground-plan and the elevation-plan and demonstrated how the Shaivite temples were transformed from sanctuaries to forts. His meticulous approach was a lesson in both methodology and analysis. A whole section was devoted to the Lakulish Images of Shiva which have been the subject of some controversy.

Debala Mitra concentrated upon Eastern India and U.P. Shahon the images of Shiva as Lakulish in Western India. Doris Chatham's paper on the Shiva images in Elura was informative, although in her analysis of the dance panels of Elura, she did not contribute anything new on the subject and seemed to rely heavily upon Gopinath Rao. Similarly, Odila Divakaran's paper on Durga, the great goddess was rich and informative and massive data relating to the Durga image was presented. The most important amongst the new approaches to the Shiva images was Thomas Maxwell's paper on the reassessment of the Shiva at Parel. Understandably, this paper gave rise to a heated controversy because Thomas Maxwell sought to disturb the hitherto accepted notion of dividing plastic images in terms of the three *loka*-s (worlds) and evaluated the panel as a meditational construct. Perhaps the publication of this paper will provoke further stimulating comment. M.Dhaky presented a very charming paper on the *Bhuta*-s and

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Bhutanayaka-s, specially their schematic presentation in the Temples. His paper gave rise to a discussion on the sociological interpretation of the *Gana* and *Bhuta* figures, their placement and their function in a total design.

R.Nagaswamy, as was to be expected, presented hitherto unpublished material relating to the Chola Shiva figures and also sought to re-interpret the iconography and significance of the Brihadeshvara temple. He also offered an explanation for the placing of the reliefs of the 108 dancing *karana*-s in Brihadeshvara, above the *garbhagriha*. He interpreted the temple, its structure and planning of the main *lingam* and the reliefs as a replica of the cosmic dance of consciousness. This is indeed a novel explanation and further responses to this thesis would be eagerly awaited. C.Sivaramamurti silently, yet eloquently nodded thus giving his assent. Similarly, Devangana Desai's paper was a re-interpretation of the *mithuna* figures in Khajuraho. She competently refuted earlier theories on the subject, specially those based on the Tantric cults and analysed these reliefs in terms of the *Sandhya Bhasha* and the *Shriyantra*. Again this is an original and refreshingly new approach which requires further discussion. Her paper was a model of conciseness and organizational clarity in presentation.

There was a lively session on the literature and poetry of Shiva. While Ludo Rocher gave an account of the development of the theme in the *Purana*-s, A. K. Ramanujan presented the powerful Shaivite poetry of medieval Kannada *bhakti* poets. Barbara Stoler Miller's paper on Kalidasa's verbal icon (*Ashtamurti*) was thought-provoking. Wendy O'Flaherty presented a very interesting paper on Shiva Erect and Supine. She sought to interpret Shaivite mythology in the light of Freudian psychology and of the structuralism of Levi Strauss. This paper was well-received except for a debate on her interpretation of even the Trivikrama, image of Vishnu as a sex symbol. Her identification of the Durga images as symbols of war, battle and love was well-taken and could be further supported. The discussion on the paper revolved around concepts and paradigms of understanding a civilization and culture from the inside and outside. It was argued by some of the participants that looking at Indian myth through Freud and the paradigm of binary opposites might not always help to bare the whole truth. For example, it was said that instead of the binary opposites, could not the principle of the triad (*trimurti, trikala, triguna, tripurantaka, triloka, trisandhya*) be considered as more pertinent for identifying the typology? A paper on *Natesha* was presented by Kapila Vatsyayan where the history of scholarship with respect to the identification of the Nataraja images was discussed. Also presented was a new chronology for the three sites in South India which have a systematic depiction of the 108 karanas in stone relief.

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There were also papers on the Shiva theme and the Gorakhnatha theme in Indian painting and the place of the Shiva theme in Orissa in the context of the Jagannatha cult. Both Pramod Chandra and Joanne Williams presented papers which were convincingly competent with a well-defined structure and conclusions.

The two major events were supplemented by several other programmes specially in the Museum, comprising music and dance recitals, lectures and above all a film called *Manifestations of Shiva* by Malcolm Leigh.

Outstanding amongst the music and dance recitals was a memorable concert by Vishwanath and Ranganath (Balasaraswati's brothers) on Shaivite music and another by Ranganayaki. There were performances by RitaDevi, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, and Kapila Vatsyayan. Amongst the lectures those of Wendy O'Flaherty, Pratapaditya Pal, Pramod Chandra and B.N. Goswami were quite popular.

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Prehistoric Paintings

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

Predating all theoretical and technical formulations on either painting or dance is the overpowering evidence of the early man's preoccupation with the human body in beautiful moments of rhythmic movement. Dance has been recognised at once as the most primitive and the most sophisticated of the arts by both arts historians and anthropologists. Evidence relating to early man's involvement with movement and dance is not exclusive to India or Asia. It is universal. Indeed the earliest records of this awareness can be found in the cave paintings of the prehistoric period in different parts of the world, particularly in Europe and Africa.

The discovery of the sketches in the caves of La Mouthe, Altamira and Lascaux reveals not only the early man's preoccupation with hunt and fertility magic, but also the movements of dance, specially his awareness of space. Although the evidence is meagre and we cannot interpret all hunt scenes as war dances, or all drawings of groups as fertility cult dances, we are convinced that all these drawings reflect his awareness of movement and his capacity to arrest and record it in lines. The human figures in many of these cave paintings (except perhaps some static figures in Cogul) are nearly all in movement. Alan Houghton Broderick describes the Levantine art of Spain in vivid terms: "Men are shown jumping, leaping like ballet dancers, running, dancing. As you look at them, you feel that you are witnessing actors in a shadow-show, actors, whose bodies are greatly elongated by the play of light. In some of the figures although there is always distortion, the general proportions of the human body are portrayed. In other figures everything is sacrificed to action, action conveyed with a startling and subjective cunning."[1]

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These observations of art historians and prehistorians become meaningful when counter-poised against our experience of the living continuities in many parts of the world. While in Europe these layers of human life have been obliterated, and sunk deep, in other parts of the world, they survive vibrantly in the life-style of groups of people who are sometimes dismissed as 'primitives' or 'tribals'. The paintings of Cogul in the province of Lerida in eastern Spain incorporate a motif which recurs in different parts of the world ranging from the dances of some tribes (Bushmen) of South Africa to the Negritos of the Philippine Islands. This motif of a man encircled by women is common to the paintings of Cogul and those of the above groups and we are not unfamiliar with it in several tribal and folk dances of India, not to speak of its emergence as the Moon myth of the Dark God.

If what has been said above is valid for a better comprehension of the early history of dance in the Western civilization,[2] we can have little doubt of its pertinence and relevance to the Indian context. The coexistence of many stages of human development has been much commented upon, and needs no restatement. What is perhaps still not sufficiently understood is that the study of ethnology (or cultural anthropology) and art can become a study of prehistory, and the findings of prehistory can ensure a better understanding of all that we understand by the popular term 'tribal and folk dance' in India.

Although in the Indian context the few but significant survivals of cave paintings do not belong strictly to the prehistoric period (as they are all late), they nevertheless, belong to the family of stone-age paintings in other parts of the world. These paintings have an'ethos' which links them to the similar art in Europe (i.e. the Aurignacian and Magdalenian cultures) which possibly preceded them by many centuries. Be that as it may, they represent for us the specimens of the art of the hunter, the bowman, the fisherman, the tool-maker, the cultivator and the metal-worker. Without going into heated controversies between the prehistorians and the archaeologists,[3] we can look at these paintings as a powerful expression of early man's concern with the movement of the body and his awareness of a relationship between man and both time and space. We may also examine these paintings as pertinent to the later developments of both schematic painting and choreographical patterns of dance in India. Their relevance to an understanding of the living continuities in several parts of India is self-evident.

The paintings which belong to this early phase (even if they belong in archaeological terms to a later period) have been found in the Adamgarh quarry shelter near Hoshangabad, and in about fifty shelters in the Mahadev Hills lying

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around Pachmarhi. Besides, these are the sites of Singhanpur and Kabra Pahar, formerly part of Raigarh State, now in Madhya Pradesh. Other shelters are at Likhunia, Kohbar, Mahraria, Bijaygarh along the Bhaldario river in the Sonpur valley in Mirzapur, and at Mankipur in Banda district. Since 1972 excavations have been going on in the important site of Bhimbetka which lies between Obaidullaganj (Hirania) and Barkheda (near Bhopal) in Madhya Pradesh. During the last five years a few more sites in the same hill range have been explored. Amongst these is the site near Shahganj ghat, Amargarh, near Naganpur, and Chuna Pani, south of Bhimbetka.

Although Prof. Wakankar[4] has now suggested a chronology based on Cl4 dating, the matter is still open to discussion. He places the upper palaeolothic cultures of Kaimur, Bhimbetka, Maharashtra and Andhra between 10,000 and 20,000 B.C. and the mesolithic period between 7,000 and 10,000 B.C. in the sites of Afghanistan and Kaimur ranges. This is usually considered the golden age of rock paintings and engravings. If we agree with this dating, the cave paintings would be coeval with the site of Cogul (Spain), etc. in Europe. Other Indian prehistorians, however, have seriously questioned this sequence. All that we may say in the light of the divergent views of prehistorians on the subject is that these specimens of rock paintings, rubbed specimens of ruddle (haematite), bruisings and engravings present a fascinating record of hunting, battle scenes, birds and animals, human relationships, totems of ritual and fertility, and, finally, a love for music and dance. Many scholars[5] have dwelt at length on these rock-cut drawings and engravings, and it is not necessary for us to go over this ground again. As in the paintings of Cogul, one overwhelming impression is that of rhythmic movement. Alongside, is the impression that these paintings had the dual purpose of fulfilling man's innate desire for self-expression and utilizing these paintings for rituals before or after the hunt. In short, the dance and the painting were directly related to life-function. This phenomenon is still evident in the artistic expression of the societies of hunters and cultivators. Art and function or work are not dissociated from each other, they are aspects of the same life-concerns.

All the cave shelters of India (whatever may be the actual date of the paintings) reflect the early man's preoccupation with the daily functions of life. Also an awareness of 'consecrating space' (or an area) is evident in most of these paintings. Magic and charm are infused into the life-functions, and thus begin the artistic expressions which are integral to fertility rites.The caves of Raigrah and Pachmarhi present a graphic picture of animal life, particularly the elephant,

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hare, stag and bison. Besides, they capture in line and minimal colours many aspects of human life, other than the hunt, including scenes of domestic life, totems, worship symbol and occasions of dance and music. All these paintings are significant for a study of movement patterns. What we call 'art-dance' developed undoubtedly from this first awareness of movement in space, whether it was in the context of hunt or any other aspect of life.

An examination of the evidence brought forth by the prehistorians and archaeologists is enough to lead us to the conclusion that the music and dance scenes of these paintings can be considered as a distinct category. Indeed

Fig. 1 Bow and arrow war dance, Hoshangabad

Dr. Jagdish Gupta devotes a whole chapter to these in his work on prehistoric painting in India.[6]

We select only a few examples which are pertinent to a study of the tribal and folk traditions of Indian dance. Although it is true that the rock cut paintings of Hoshangabad contain no scenes which are perhaps directly related to music and dance, there are many which revolved around the hunt (Fig.1). In one magnificent scene, there are a group of archers each with a bow and a number of arrows. The four figures are in a formation suggestive of the dance. Each single figure has an individual style and there are no repetitions. Also it will be obvious that there is a progressive development of movement of the lower limbs. In the first figure there is only a limited elevation from the ground and the knee of one leg is lifted to the level of the waist. The second figure is more suggestive of movement and the torso is in a state of tension. The two figures together from a pair and appear to depict two moments of the same sequence. The other two figures comprise the second pair, and this time the position of the lower limbs is reversed. The knee of one leg is bent and the foot of this leg very clearly

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holds the weight of the body; the other leg is free to move in space. In one, this free leg is extended back and is held at the level of the knee; in the other (the extreme right figure) it is extended backward with greater force and the foot is almost at the level of the hips. The torso is pushed forward to provide the balance. It will be observed that these figures exhibit a remarkable understanding of the laws of movement in the act of shooting an arrow. Perhaps this awareness gave rise to a whole series of movements in the formalized language of dance.

Fig. 1A

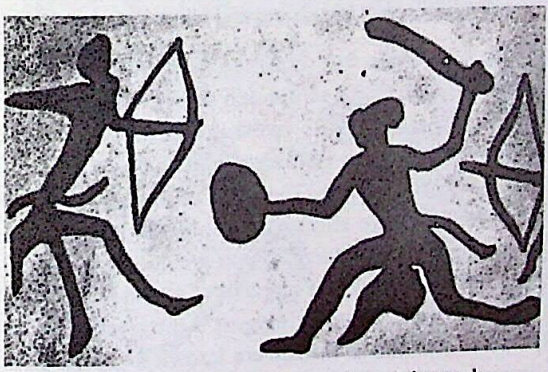

Fig. 1B

Fig. 1A Bow and arrow warriors, Adamgarh
Fig. 1B Bow and arrow, sword and shield dance, Imali Khoha, Panchamarhi

All these movements draw their inspiration from the use of bows and arrows and other weapons. Bharata speaks of the *alidha* and *pratyalidha* postures for the release of missiles. The cave paintings are a forerunner of this formal language of art.

Besides, the drawings are important from another point of view. Each of these archers obviously wears a mask or headgrear, a feature which still, survives in many tribal dances. The movements of Chhadiya dancers of Narendrapura district,

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Fig.2 Horse riders with swords and shields (late period), Hoshangabad

Orissa, are the closest survivals of such protohistoric dance forms, and each anticipates later trends in art dances. The Chhadiya dancers, however, do not wear masks. Other interesting parallel examples of warriors (Fig.1A and Fig.1B) can be seen in Adamgarh, and Imali Khoa in Pachmarhi.

The bow and the arrow is the first primitive weapon. The sword and shield are the next. The appearance of the sword and shield indicates different stage of man's social development, where metal appears. The famous riders from Hoshangabad (Fig.2) are indicative of this stage, both on account of the sword and shield, and the presence of horse. The sense of drama is impressive in this drawing: the horses and men are all captured in dynamic moment of action. While the horse and rider on the extreme right are comparatively static, the warrior in the middle is certainly in a moment of action. The other two horses and riders (on the extreme right again suggest a progressive acceleration of movement. The sword and shield dances are known to all parts of India and constitute an important category of dances, both at the rural and urban level. They are an important aspect of the pre-Vaisnava dances of Manipur. The Kalari exercises, incorporated in Kathakali, are the very base of at least two if not all the three Chhau forms. The pari-khanda exercises of Seraikala Chhau and Mayurabhanja Chhau are well known. The antiquity of these can be traced back to these examples in line and colour. The central figure of our panel (Fig.2) once again exhibits a sensitive understanding of the motor actions. The presence of the *pratyalidha* and the particular position of the arms with one hand holding the sword and the other a shield are typical of most of the war dances and are still extant. From these various movements of actual function, emerge the

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several weapon dances, or martial drill dances obtained in many parts of India. One could go further and deduce, although somewhat hesitantly, that it was the careful observation of such movements which gave rise to a number of stylized gaits and walking styles codified in the *Natyasastra* under the categories of the *sthanas, caris* and *gatis.* Stylization of movement emerged from a study of nature, animals and human movement. Infact, had they been an arbitrary set of

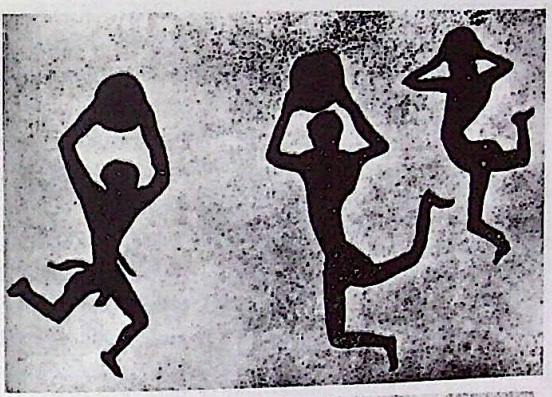

Fig. 3

Fig. 3A

Fig. 3 & Fig. 3A War dance with balls, Jambudvipa, Panchmarhi

movements, their validity may have been lost in the subsequent centuries. Many conjectures have been made on the identity of these warriors and the date of these paintings,[7] and even if they belong to the period between the 5th and 10th centuries A.D., they are valuable for studying the movements in Indian dance, which developed from warfare and wielding of weapons.

From Pachmarhi (Jambudvipa) comes yet another interesting scene which can be interpreted either as a scene of warfare or that of athletics. Dr. Jagdish

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Fig.4 A hunt scene, Singanpur

Gupta considers it a scene of warfare. Each of the figures (Fig3) is holding a circular object, may be a ball or a stone, and appears to be in readiness to throw it in space. The lower limb movements are close parallels to those of the Hoshangabad archers (Fig.1). It is clear that the painters of Panchmarhi were equally aware of natural kinesthetics. The awareness of movement is so keen that we could indeed identify this as a dance scene rather than a scene of warfare. A less naturalistic scene comes from the same site, from Imali Khoha (Fig. 3A). There is a greater degree of stylization here.

From Singhanpur come important hunt scenes. One of these (Fig. 4) shows a number of persons trying to encircle an animal. The animal figure of this painting and the same in other paintings at the site are reminiscent of similar paintings in Australia and the La Cabellas shelters of Spain.[8] While the formations are different, the distribution of space and the confrontation of man and animal reflect a similar awareness of movement. This example from Singhanpur perhaps predates the examples from Hoshangabad and is important for understanding the choreographical patterns of many dances of India, which draw their inspiration from the hunt. Chief amongst these are the variety of dances of several Naga communities in north-eastern India. The formations of such dance evolved directly out of the movements involved in hunting. In fact, many dances in India, which today centre around agricultural functions, continue to adhere to the movement patterns which were originally associated with the hunt. The breaking up of the party into several small groups which later make a single formation of a circle or a square is a common feature of many of these dances.

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As has been pointed out above, the activity of the hunt itself leads to many rites and rituals. Scenes of ritual and of 'consecrated space' and 'consecrated persons' for a particular occasion are many. A signficant example of consecrated space comes from Mirzapur (Fig.5). Here four figures are seen within the space of a rectangle.[9] Three others stand outside the rectangular space. The two groups constitute clearly differentiated units of a single composition. The lower limbs of men in both the groups are in a formed position. We donot often encounter this stance in the later India sculpture or painting. Although the relationship of the four within the enclosed space is loose, the two figures amongst the three outside the enclosed space have a close relationship with interlocked hands. The frills and the decorations around the enclosed space make it clear that the area was something special or consecrated, and that this was the forerunner of some kind of *vedika* where ceremonies were held. The movements of the three outside are freer and they are obviously observers and not participants in the ritual. Conventions of 'conscecrating space' are found in all early civilisations, where both physical time and space are consecrated and sanctified for the duration of the ritual. Continuities of this approach are seen in many parts of India both at the tribal and the agricultural level. The vedic ritual itself began by locating an appropriate place and then consecrating it for the ritual of the *yajna*. There are vague suggestions of this conception in this scene. Circumscribing an area with magical charms and incantations is widely known. Perhaps what is not often recognised is that by 'consecrating space' man was establishing a new relationship with the cosmos and the macrocosm. Also the interlocking of the hands is an

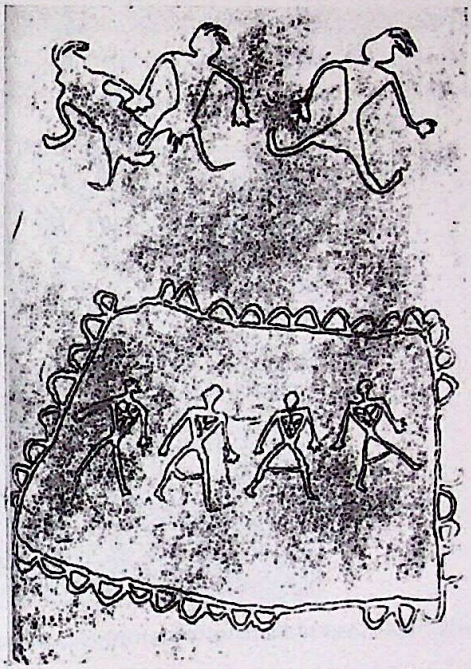

Fig.5 A ritual dance scene; in a consecrated space, Mirzapur

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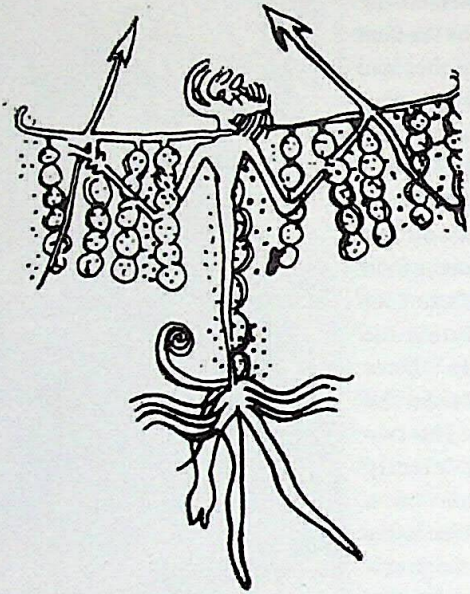

Fig.6 A ritual dancer recalling temporary Kavadi dance, Bori, Panchmarhi

important aspect of many collective dances of India and other countries. The holding of hands and the interlocking of arms are an almost universal phenomenon. In India, it is known to some tribal and rural communities and not to others. The Nagas, Khasis, and Garos do not exhibit interlocking patterns; in Central India and Himachal Pradesh they are popular.

Besides collective ritual, there is the depiction of a single human being adorned ritualistically, which recalls the dances of exorcism and trance known to all parts of India. In these dances, the person serving as the medium is decorated with flowers, beads and sometimes horned headear. An important example of this comes from Bori I, Panchmarhi, where a man is shown complete (Fig. 6) with a honeycombed headgear and adornment held in either hand.[10] Dr. Gupta identifies the adornments as honeycombs on account of their distinctive feature of points and dots. While it may be difficult to conclude whether these dots and streamers represent honeycombs, it is clear that the portraiture is of a human being who is adorned for a special ritual. Again, for an identification of this figure we have to observe the varied ritualistic practices which are found in the villages and tribal areas in India-ranging from the Marias, Gonds, Koyas to

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the Kargam dancers of Tamil Nadu and the Bhoota worshipping Kolams of Turu land and the Tiyattam and Teriyattam worshippers of Kerala. Adornments of horns, beads, flowers, vegetable stems, coconut and bamboo shoots are common.

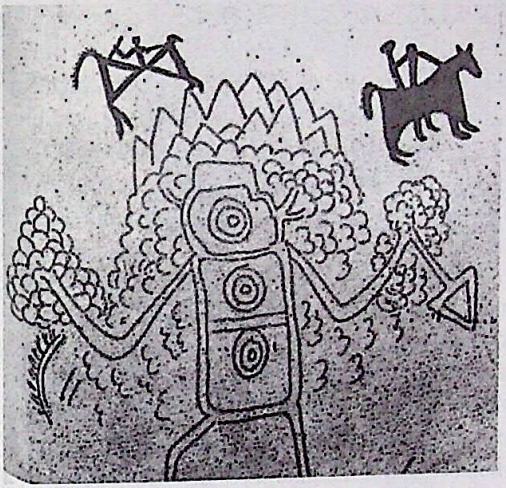

Fig.7 A man adorned with tables and creepers for a ritual dance, Adan, Hoshangabad

The origins of these ritual practices are variously dated and all belong roughly to the historic period. The evidence of this prehistoric figure suggests links with an antiquity which can be traced back to prehistoric India. The present figure is closest to the Kavadi of South India.

Another interesting example of a consecrated figure comes from Hoshangabad (Adamgarh). Etched in Ochre, this figure represents another kind of ritualistic practice, where the consecrated person is adorned with vegetables, creepers and the like (Fig.7). Students of dance are familiar with such adornments in many ritualistic dances. Several types of Kargam practices and the holding of ritual objects in the Chhau forms must be traced to these early beginnings.

We must pause here to refer also to the abstract symbols which appear in these paintings. While the history of signs and symbols is a field in itself and cannot be discussed in detail here, it is important to bear in mind that the abstract geometrical designs–the signs and symbols of these prehistoric paintings–have a close connection with the development of motifs in India art, be it in architecture, sculpture, music or dance. Although some of these are universal and are found in many other early civilizations, their integrated use in all the arts and their sustained

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continuity in wall paintings, floor designs, decorations of hands with henna (Lawsonia inermist) or mehendi, and their use as choreographical motifs in dance are perhaps peculiar to India.

No study of the Indian arts would be meanginful and complete without reference to the significant part played by these motifs in all artistic creations. Here we can briefly refer to the concrete motifs of tree and man, or woman, the abstract motifs of the circle with a centre, the concentric circles, the triangle and the design which is generally identified as the *svastik.* It is significant that the intertwined serpent so pervasive in Indian sculpture and significant in ritualas the nagamandala in all parts of India (it is found in Manipur, Kerala, Karnataka, etc.) is totally absent in these paintings.[11] The circle and the intersecting vertical and horizontal lines (suggestive of the svastika) are more frequent. Rows of men and women in straight lines and diagonals are also seen. If we correlate these with the motifs which we see in wall paintings and in floor decorations of different parts of India, we shall be convinced of the remarkable resemblance between this prehistoric past and contemporary practice. While it may not be possible to trace an unbroken continuity, it is evident that the present-day conventions recall these early manifestations of abstract designs. A detailed study of these, even within the periphery of the dance, is, however, outside the purview of the present study.

Amongst the music and dance scenes proper there are many which are of

Fig.8 Martial dance with javelines, Nimbubhoja, Panchamarhi

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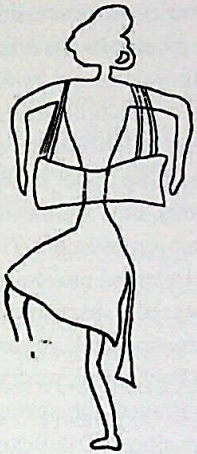

Fig.9

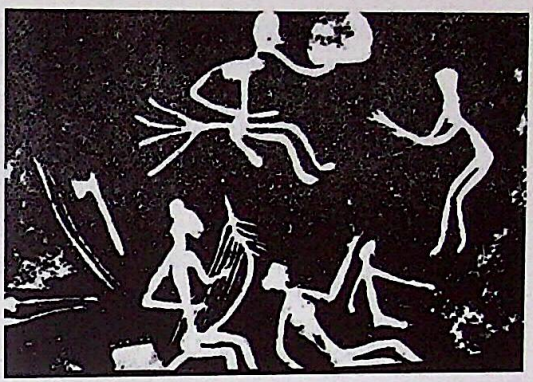

Fig.9A A harpist and family, Bhimbetka

Fig.9 & Fig. 9B
Musicians with drums:
V. Dane Cave,
Panchamarhi

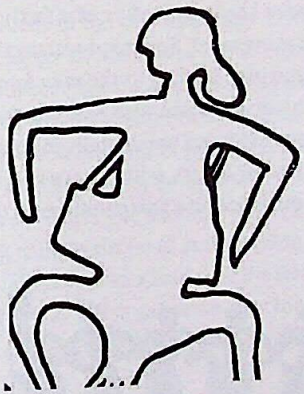

Fig.9B

great significance from the point of view of tribal and folk dances of India. They cannot be directly linked with the traditions of dance mentioned in literary works ranging from the Vedas to the Puranas but nevertheless they are the precursors of the concept of the *pindi-bandha* (collective dance compositions) found in the *Natyasastra*.

Dr. Gordon, Ghosh and Dr.Jagdish Gupta list many such dance scenes[12] from different parts of India. As has been mentioned above, the Panchmarhi specimens contain the most prolific depictions of music and dance. The site of Mori in Chambal Valley is a close second. In these dance scenes we find solo, duet and group dances, sometimes only of men or women, sometimes mixed. They are usually in straight lines but there is evidence of curves also. No complete circular

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dance has been depicted. Musical instruments range from a variety of percussion instruments such as *dhol mrdanga* and even a precursor of *damru*, to wind instruments which recall the contemporary *singhbaja, algoja* and the *turhi*, and finally, to bowed stringed instruments with single and multiple strings (Fig.9A). An examination of the lines and stances reveals an awareness of movement in space through the articulation of the lower and the upper limbs. While the torso and the head are represented as separate units, they are mostly static single units of the body without the possibility of dynamic movement. The lower limbs are used in a variety of ways. There is a frontal vertical movement and movements which emerge from flexing the knee. In a few scenes, particularly from Baniyabari in Panchmarhi, there is suggestion of elevation and release from the ground.[13] In another scene from Nimbhubhoja in Pachmarhi, we find two warriors (Fig. 8) in a movement of battle, one figure is portrayed anticipating a *kuncita karana* of the *Natyasastra*[14] in a half-kneeling position. The flexed knee and the extended leg is indicative of a fairly advanced state of consciously evolving pattern of movement. Square or rectangular positions of the lower limbs akin to the open grand plie, leading to the *mandala sthana*, are also in evidence.[15] The treatment of the upper limbs also exhibits the same awareness of movment (Fig.9). They are seen extended horizontally in some, frontally or straight in others, and held at the waist in others with a marked elbow flexion. The use of the diagonal is also in evidence in a few paintings, a common feat of dance sculpture

Fig.10 -A group dance with arms interlocked: Baniyarbori, Panchamarhi

Fig.11 A ceremonial dance: Mori Caves, Madhya Pradesh

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of the historical period. There is an impression of vitality and vigour and an unmistakable ability of capturing the kinetic rhythm.[16]

For obvious reasons it is not possible to analyse these interesting examples of dance and music in detail. We have restricted ourselves to a few illustrations of collective dance from two different areas, namely Pachmarhi in Madhya Pradesh and Mori in Chambal.

On the ceiling of the Baniyabari cave in Panchmarhi is seen a collective dance (Fig.10). Five dancers stand in a row with interlocked arms. The arms are interlocked at the shoulder level.[17] The two dancers on either side give a sense of symmetry with a flexed knee and an extended leg. The two dancers in the middle (second and third from the left) describe a slight elevation from the ground by the raising of one foot; another dancer, second from the right, stands in an open, erect position. Although Dr. Gupta identifies the second and third dancers as females, their sex is not evident in the line drawing. What he identifies as breasts may well be the swellings of their scarves or other garments. The interlocking of arms is an important feature of dance and we can again recall many dances of Central India, in which the interlocked arms play an important role. The Mori rock shelters of Madhya Pradesh present another type of group dance: in this, the principle of foreshortening as opposed to elongation of the Panchmarhi drawings is followed. Here, yet another pattern of interlocking is seen (Fig.11). The arms interlock at the waist level and an interesting geometrical pattern in space is in evidence. There is also a leader of the dance with an ornate crown or headgear. The dancers wear fuller garments reaching to their knees.[18] Although the lower limbs do not move so freely, the rhythm of the dance is suggested through the interlocked arms. These collective dances, with the distinguishing feature of interlocked arms and hands, are strongly reminiscent of the tribal dances of the Hos, Santhals, Oraons of Bihar, and the Gonds and Marias of Madhya Pradesh. Today, we attribute this characteristic feature to

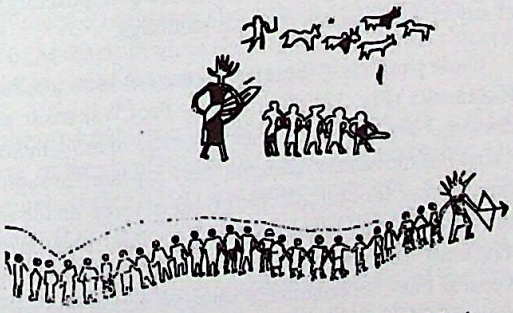

Fig.11A—A processional dance from Mori

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the institution of the Dhumukuria or the Ghotul, but whether or not this existed in prehistoric India, the artistic motif is common to all contemporary tribal dances and is eloquently depicted in prehistoric rock paintings.

Our third example is of an even larger group,[19] obviously a hunting dance in an open space (Fig. 11A). The scene from Mori in Chambal depicts two groups,

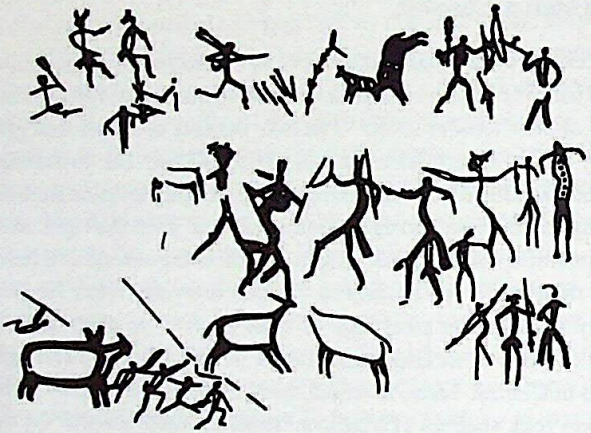

Fig.12—A hunt scene: Bhimbetka

one in the foreground comprising twenty-eight dancers with a leader adorned with feathers and a second smaller group in the back ground. A third group of six dancer-hunters is seen at the centre: one figure holds a bow and arrow; the others have interlocked hands. The row of dancers in the foreground is shown in a curve slightly serpentine but without any specific choreographical pattern. The occasion of the hunt is obvious. It is, however, puzzling not to find the representation of any circular dances in these paintings.

Close parallels to these hunt scenes of Mori in Chambal are the hunt scenes of Bhimbetka (Fig. 12) identified by Prof. Wakankar as early mesolithic.[20] These drawings are like match-stick notation of movement and are interesting for the variety of movement patterns they capture through an amazing economy of line. Notice, for example, the group of three on the extreme right corner below; the central figure is quite obviously a chief, and the other two are his lieutenants. The sense of power this figure conveys is achieved through the erect posture and vertical lines. In contrast, a sense of action and movement is conveyed by the figure on the left. This is achieved through the curvilinear treatment of the torso, and the forking of the legs. A formation of hunters is in the central panel: the

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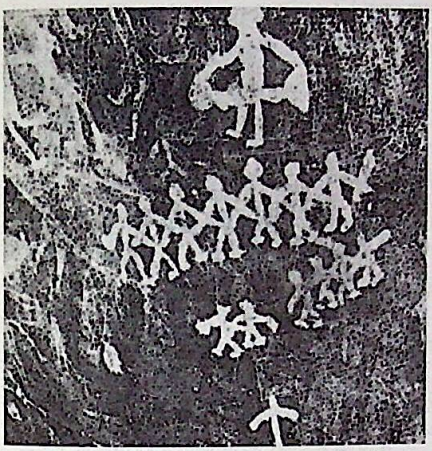

Fig.12A– group dance accompanied by a drummer

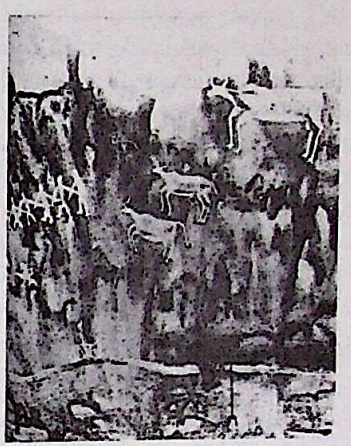

Fig.12B –Dancers, drummers, and bears: Bhimbetka

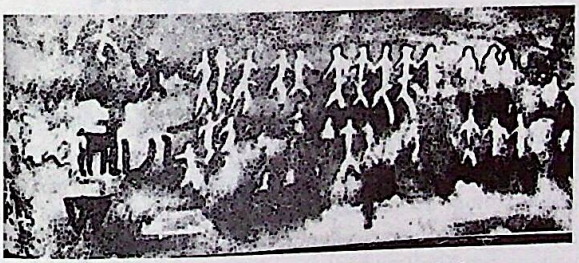

Fig.12C– Dance congregation: Bhimbetka

stance of each hunter is different and the group forms an interesting ensemble. The living parallels to such compositions can be easily detected in many tribal dances of India. Interesting are the headgears also, which are reminiscent of the headgears of the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh (Fig. 12A, B & C). Interlocked arms are characteristic of other scenes from Bhimbetka.

Of great significance are the masked human figures from Bhimbetka (Fig.13).[21] All these are the counterparts of the ritual dancers of Pachmarhi and Mori. Of particular interest to ethnographers (Fig. 13A) and dance historians would be the drawings of Prof. Wakankar (Fig.IV-A-9). Here is a man with a number of *ghatas* one balanced on top of the other. We are all familiar with the significance of the *ghata* in Indian life and art at all levels. It becomes the symbol of fertility and plenty–the purna ghata–in Indian art, and represents *Sakti* in styles like Bhavai and Chhau. Its appearance in the cave paintings of Bhimbetka gives us

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Fig.13

Fig.13A

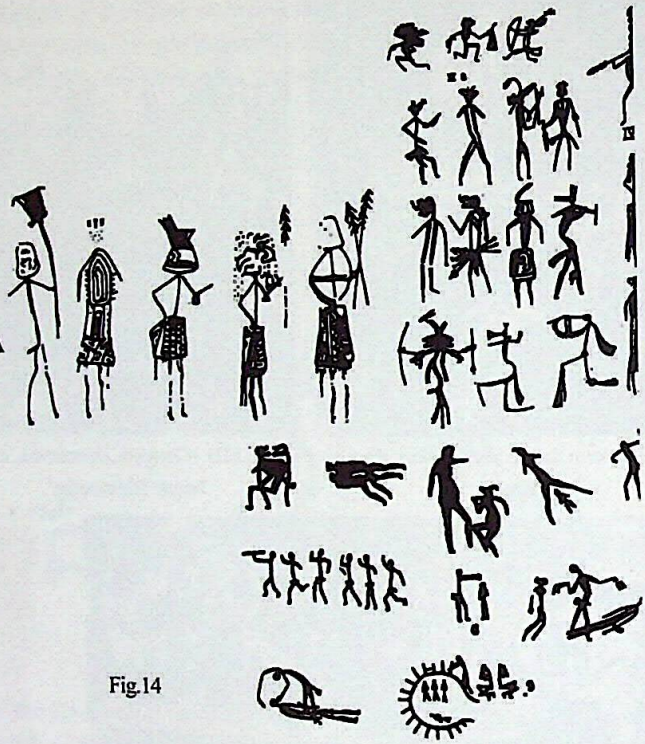

Fig.14

Fig. 13–Varied dance scene: Bhimbetka
Fig. 13A–Men with masks, ready for a ritual dance
Fig. 14 –Duet and group compositions

an insight into these common ritual practices of folk dances of India. All the other masked figures of this site are also relevant to a study of contemporary tribal and folk dances and artistic motifs which shape the 'great tradition' of Indian art.

The domestic scenes from Bhimbetka present another fascinating picture. One drawing has been identified as an amorous couple.[22] This is a remarkable example of a highly developed sense of movement. The two figures are interlocked with a rare sophistication (Fig.14), recalling the achievements of a Klee or a Miro. Attention of the viewers is immdeiately drawn to the elevated leg of one figure which is supported by the flexed leg of the other. Although tribal dance does not present us with an evidence of such couple-dancing, Indian art presents an almost unbroken continuum of such couples in the maithun or other motifs.

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Finally, there is a group which has been identified as children playing. This is another match-stick drawing which we could easily consider as man's early efforts at rotating movements. Whether children or men, the figures are either running or dancing. The first of these obviously holds a musical instrument, and the third, again, is a central figure, powerful and erect. The principle of one foot holding the weight and the other free to move in space is fundamental to this drawing as it is to practically all the Indian dances. The same principle is followed in the depiction of dance in Indian sculpture and painting of later times. All these are related to development in other parts of the world, particularly in West Asia. This particular group recalls the dancing groups from the Negev desert, in which several men are seen dancing to a tambourine being played by a seated man.[23]

The few selective eramples from the numerous rock paintings will make it clear that 'movement' or 'Dance' was a primary concern of this society. It will also be clear that dance was integral to many life-functions particularly hunting. The making of pictures might have had the dual purpose of serving a ritualistic function as well as fulfiling an aesthetic urge. These specimens also tell us of the antiquity of the mask and the impulse for impersonalization or depersonalization. This deduction can be made from a study of the Indian, European and African examples.[24] Further, the consecration of space and the consecration of partcular individuals for ritual purposes were widely prevalent. This is borne out by the Mirzapur example and those from Mori, Bori and Bhimbetka. The first tells us of the beginning of the concepts of a 'consecrating space' where physical space becomes symbolic of cosmic space. The second set of examples tells us of the incipient seeds of all that we know of the traditions of consecrating the body of an individual so that he or she becomes the medium of communication between the divine and the mundane, or acquires divinity or sacredness for the duration of the ritual. These paintings are a significant clue to an understanding of a number of ritual practices in India, both in the distant past and immediate present. As pointed out earlier, the evidence of pre-history is a co-ordinate in our understanding of the ethnology and anthropology of the living survivals and continuities in Indian art forms and religious rituals.

The paintings are a revealing record of man's keen awareness of corporal movements. The laws of kinesthetics are hardly ever erred against, we discern here a variety of movement patterns which continue to have meaning and significance. Chief amongst these is the understanding of the relationship between 'man' and 'earth' and 'man' and 'sky' or the space above and around him. The paintings reflect an awareness of man in relation to the earth and there is imaginative flight into space without a tacit assertion of the earth principle.

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Further, in terms of the limbs of the human body, these paintings tells us of an informed understanding of the joints of the body and of the aesthetic possibilities of articulating the limbs from the fulcrum points. The knee and elbow joints play an important part. In all the figures, with the extension or flexion, the knee is given significance as an important intermediary point. This fundamental understanding of the human body naturally gives rise to a continuity in certain types of locomotions. Hence it is not surprising that while prescribing a movement like alidha, Bharata was inventing an arbitrary language of art; he was only recognizing and, codifying a natural act. The beginnings of the alidha and pratya-*alidha*–two fundamental sthanas–have to be sought in these early paintings and in the act of shooting an arrow. Similarly, the conscious effort to show tension and expansion through the use of the torso is fundamental to the arts, because they are basic physical reflex actions.[25]

The varied movements of the limbs give rise to cadences, and these inturn flower into group formations with many interesting choreographical patterns. While the erect figure and the figures in incipient crude *alidha sthana* are almost universal, the formations are varied. A popular feature of the Indian scenes, in contrast to the European scenes, is the frequent appearance of the interlocked hands or arms. In the European examples, the relationship is largely loose and there is hardly any contact of one body with another.[26] In the Indian examples, the interlocking of hands and arms is a distinctive feature. The survivals of these patterns are seen in many tribal dances, but particularly in those of the Central Indian tribes, such as the Hos, the Oraons and the Marias and finally the Santhals. These formations perhaps gave rise to a class of movements which Bharata terms as *pindibadha* and includes the presentation of these in the preliminaries of the play, namely the *purvaranga*. Although the exact contours of the gradual development of these patterns into a grammar of art cannot be traced with our present state of knowledge, the pictorial evidence opens a new possibility of exploration. If tribal myths and legends gave rise to many iconographical forms of Hindu deities, it is not surprising that prehistoric patterns of movement and tribal dancing should contribute significantly to the evolution of a grammar of classical art.

Another motif which should stimulate further investigation is the appearance of one man surrounded by women, which occurs in Spain[27] and elsewhere. The motif reappears in Indian painting of the historical period and suggests many *pauranic* myths and legends.

An interesting negative observation which must be made in this context is an extremely rare presence of the motif of the circle. The historians of dance

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movement and observers of contemporary dance-culture will tell us of the pervasiveness of this motif in all group dancing. So far, we have come across only a solitary example in an engraved cup depicting a phallic rain dance of the Hopis, in the Ethnographical Museum, Berlin.[28] We cannot conclude anything from the absence of this motif in Indian examples. Yet, it may not be presumptuous to speculate that the circle was a later development in the Indian context. This, however, is nothing more than a tentative deduction from the evidence so far examined.

Our last observation relates to the geometrical motifs which appear in the schematic and stylized paintings. Here several geometrical motifs appear: the straight line, the diagonal, the semi circle, the square and the rectangle; but hardly ever the spiral or the intertwined serpent, or a figure of eight. This last one, however, assumes great importance in the period which follows immediately.

We must, however, reiterate that although many of these paintings may belong to a much later period of history, they belong in ethos, tone and temper to the large family of palaeolithic and mesolithic cultures in other parts of the world.[29]

NOTES

1. Broderick, A.H., Prehistoric Painting, Avalon Press Ltd., 11.
2. For other examples of dance in Europe and Africa are Broderick, p. Cit. 32 and 36, plates 25, 30, 32. Also see plates 36, 37 and 39 for masked bowman, archers and scene depicting fight of a bull in plate 39.
   Also see Sachs, Curt, World History of the Dance. W.W. Norton and Company, 207-211, and plate I for examples of dance scenes from Cogul, Spain, Cavern of Teyjat Dordogne, and Cavern of Trois Freres, Arieges.
3. There have seen heated controversies between prehistorians about the dates of these paintings. Some scholars like Prof. V.S. Wakankar believe that the earliest are 10,000 years old; the others believe that while the caves are old, the paintings themselves belong to a period not earlier than the fifth to the third century B.C. It is not our purpose to go into these controversies,
4. Wakankar, V.S., 'Bhimbetka—The prehistoric Paradise', Prachya Pratibha, Vol. iii, no. 2, 1976, 7-29.
5. Brown, Percy, Indian Painting, The Heritage of India Series, Calcutta, 6th Edn., 1953, 15-16.
   Ghosh, M., 'Rock-paintings and other Antiquities of Prehistoric, and Later Times', Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 24, 1932.
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   Silberrad, C.A., 'Rock Drawings in the Banda District', Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. iii, New Series, 1907.
   Gordon, D.H., 'The Rock-paintings of Kabra Pathar', Science and Culture, Calcutta, Nov. 1939. vol. v. No. 11, 662.

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Anderson, C.W., 'The Rock-paintings of Singhanpur', Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna, Vol. iv, 1918.

6. Gupta, Jagdish, Pragaitahasika Bharatiya Citrakata (Hindi), National publishing House, 1967, Sec. 8 (Nritya Vadya).
7. Gordon, D.H, Science and Culture, Vol. v. no. 10, 584.
8. Broderick, op. cit., pl. 5.
9. M. Mazumdar's description in Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India No. 24, 1932.
10. Gordon op. cit., Vol. ii, 662; Gupta, op. cit., 436.
11. Vatsyayan, Kapila, Tradition of Indian Folk Dance, 28, 29.
12. Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India, no. 24, 1932; Archaeology in India, 1950; and Indian Archaeology—A Review, 1956-1961.
13. Gupta, op. cit. Illustrations 387ff.
14. Ibid., Sec. 8, pl. viii, Fig. 1, 394.
15. Ibid., 383-384.
16. Ibid., Sec. 8, pl. v. fig. 1, for horizontal extensions; pl. iii, fig. 2, for sideways movement; pl. ix, fig. 1, for flexed arms and pl. vii, figs. 1 & 2 for flexed arms.
17. Ibid., 390, pl, iv, fig. 1.
18. Ibid., fig. 2.
19. Ibid., 381 and pl. vi on 392 after Wakankar; see his 'Painted Rock Shelters of India'.
20. Wakankar, Bhimbetka (op. cit.), Fig. 5.
21. Ibid., fig. 6, compare with masked dancers La Mola Remigia shelter E. Spain, (Gasulla Gorge); Broderick, op. cit., pl. 6.
22. Ibid., Wakankar, fig. 7(i) and (v).
23. Ibid., fig. 7(v). Carel J. Du Ry. Art of the Ancient Near and Middle East, Abrams, Illustrations, 30 & 31.
24. See Sachs; op. cit., pl. i of Paleolithic Mask Dancers from the Cavern of Teyjat Dordogne and Cavern of Trios Freres, Arieges.
25. Broderick, op. cit., pl. 32, pl. 36, 37 and 38 from Libya and Spain, as also pl. 39. The movement is almost universal.
26. Ibid., pl. 43, of a Mantis Dance from South Africa and pl. 46 from Leopard's Ravine, South West Africa.
27. Sachs, op. cit., pl. i, from Cogul.
28. Ibid., pl. 6.
29. For a general narration of the art of the period see History of Mankind, Unesco, vol. i 187-214.

Also see Walter, Torbreigge, Prehistoric European Art, Abrams, dancing human figures in bird costume, rock drawing, Kallasangen, Bottna Bohustan, Sweden, 125 (belonging to Bronze age) and ritual dancer in ceremonial costume from Jarrestad, Sweden, 126.

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The Dance Sculptures of Lara-Djonggrang (Prambanan): A Comparative Study

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

Much has been written about the architectural style and the sculptural reliefs of the Lara Djonggrang group of temples by scholars ranging from Stutterheim[1] to Kempers[2] and Claire Holt[3]. However, none of these scholars have paused to examine in detail the sixty-two dancing figures from the balustrade of the Shiva temple. Kempers devotes to them the greatest attention by including four examples[4] and a paragraph on them. He says, "There are 62 panels with dancing figures on the outside of the railing demonstrating a dance which corresponds with the *Tandava* of Shiva as described in the *Natyashastra,* a manual on the art of dancing". And, again, "The attitudes recall those of Indian dancers and the reliefs of Shiva dancing his cosmic dance in India's rock-hewn temples. The latter, however, are very much larger than the reliefs of Lara-Djonggrang which are relatively small pieces (53 cms.). An interesting feature recalling paintings at Ajanta is the manner in which the figure in Pl. 151 is depicted from the back".

Claire Holt also devotes half a paragraph to them in *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change*[5], and writes, "Another series carved on the outer walls of balustrade consists of 62 groups of celestial musicians and dancers. The sense of animated movements and sometimes ecstatic attitudes based on the famous moments in the dance of Shiva is so vital that the whole temple seems to be engirdled by their dance rhythms. Each recessed group of dancers alternates with a group of three celestial beings posed in softly graceful attitudes". In the footnotes, attention is drawn to the counterparts on the walls of the twelfth century temple at Chidambaram, dedicated to Shiva Nataraja. It is added, "A comparison of the relief panels of the two temples eloquently

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corroborates the transplantation of Indian imagery to Java". Earlier scholars, such as Scheltema in his *Monumental Java*[6] and Stutterheim[7], had also passing references to these panels, but that is the end of their consideration.

Let us begin by sketching a rough chronology of the depiction of dance poses in the Indian continent and in Java. Although dance scenes are known from the monuments of Udayagiri and Khandgiri, of Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Deogarh, Pattadakal and Aihole, the first serialised depiction in Indian art does not begin until the rock-hewn temples of Elura. To the last Kempers has rightly drawn attention. We find large reliefs of Shiva dancing in many attitudes and poses. Most of these have been identified with the description of the Nataraja dancing by some scholars, including the present ones, but none has tried to suggest that the sculptors were making a conscious effort at illustrating in stone the verses of the *Natyashastra* particularly of the Fourth Chapter entitled *Tandava Lakshanam*. The most significant systematic attempt at illustration of the *Natyashastra* is seen in the Brihadishvara temple, dated the eleventh century; this is followed by two series in the Chidambaram temple, one, without inscriptions, on the walls of the Devi Temple, and the other, inscribed, in the gopurams. A later example has been found in the Sarangapani temple dating back at the earliest to the thirteenth century, maybe to the fourteenth[9]. The Lara Djonggrang group of sixty-two figures thus falls between Elura, Pattadakal, Aihole (the Papanatha and the Durga) and the Brihadishvara, Chidambaram and Sarangapani temples of India. We need not take into account in this discussion the examples of Khajuraho, Western India and Bhuvaneshvara, Konaraka, all contemporaneous with the South Indian temples of Brihadishvara, Chidambaram and Sarangapani.

A close comparison of the examples in Elura and those in Prambanan shows that while there are affinities, there are few identities. Most of the figures in Elura fall into the category of *kunchita, lalita, chatura, katisama*[10]. When we look at the panels of the Prambanan group, we find that the preoccupation of the sculptors here is with dance poses, which certainly have much in common with the Indian tradition, but in form and technique they seem to have only a vague similarity with the Elura models. However some figures of Pattadakal are reminiscent of the Prambanan figures.

For our purposes let us take only two groups of *karana*-s, one which may be termed as the *urdhvajanu* variety, and the other of the *ghurnita* and *valita* as described in the *Natyashastra*. Although *karana*-s are cadences of movement and not static poses, their identification in sculpture has necessarily to be done on the basis of the most predominant movement of the cadence either of the hands

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or feet or torso. In both these varieties, the chief characteristic is the lower limb position. In the *ghurnita, valita, apaviddha,* there is no loss of contact with the ground. One foot is invariably *samapada,* with the upper thigh and lower calf in a *kshipta* position: the other foot is in *kunchita* or *anchita,* in a sideways contact or crossing in *swastika.* In Elura, we find examples of it, but all the poses have a distinct *katibhanga,* which result in stances rather different from those seen in Aihole, Pattadakal, Prambanan, Brihadishvara, Chidambaram and Sarangapani. The positions captured in Elura are impressive for their boldness of treatment, their sense of dynamism, but they do not make for a precise notation of movement. A characteristic feature is the seeming lack of the *kshipta* position. Except for the magnificent example of Tara dancing in the Aurangabad caves, it appears that although the *kunchita, bhujanganchita, bhujangatrasita* had been depicted in Indian sculpture, particularly in Amaravati, in Nagarjunakonda, in Deogarh and Sarnath, the Indian sculptor was not fascinated by the variety of *karana*-s which continually stressed the *kshipta* position of the lower limbs, akin to the *demi-plie* of the classical ballet, or by the idea of profile or posterior elevations or jumps, until the eighth century A.D. This is also rather surprising in the light of the mass of evidence we have on the depiction of movement, which can generally be identified as the cadences of the *vrshchika karana,* so eloquently seen in the popular 'flying motif'.

Notwithstanding the general impression of consanguinity of approach in treating mass, volume, line and perspective, it is necessary to ask the question whether definite Indian models were available to Indonesian craftsmen, and specially so in the context of the sixty-two dance panels of the balustrade of the Shiva temple in the Lara-Djonggrang group of temples. If there were models, what were these?

As has been mentioned before, the chronology of the existing evidence is a necessary framework for such a study. Most scholars agree that the temple was built in the tenth century, about 930 A.D. If this date is accepted, then we can place this temple and these panels of dancers, as appearing after Sarnath, some temples of Aihole, Pattadakal, the Aurangabad and Elura caves and before Brihadishvara, Chidambaram, and Sarangapani, and all the temples of the Chandelas in Khajuraho, the temples of Udyashvara, Bhuvaneshvara and Konaraka, where there is a prolific depiction of the dance pose.

Let us try and first sketch a rough chronology of the appearance of the two poses which are often repeated in Prambanan in the sixty-two panels. We find that from amongst the sixty-two panels, nearly one-third portray a set of three musicians and dancers, and these alternate with panels where only dancers are

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seen. The group of musicians has a drummer as a central figure: the dance panels have either a single dancer in the centre, accompanied by two subsidiary figures in the background, or a pair of dancers. Although each of the dance panels is quite distinctive and there is hardly an exact repetition, the dance poses can be broken up into four different groups of movements: most significant amongst these are the two groups which aim at capturing varying movements of the cadence of movement identified as the *ghurnita* and *valita karana,* and the *karana*-s which are characterised by the *urdhvajanu* position of the lower limbs, more specifically of one leg.

The *valita* and *ghurnita karana*-s are described in Chapter Four of the *Natyashastra*. The common feature of both these *karana*-s is the common *suchi chari* position and the names are indicative of bending, swivelling and turning around. Innumerable examples from India, Burma, Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia can be identified vaguely as depicting a pose, whose chief characteristic is a triangular position of the lower limbs, akin, as has been mentioned before, to the *demi-plie* of Western ballet. Both feet (or certainly one) are turned out and the knees are bent sideways. This is the general *kshipta* position of the knees. Indeed, this fundamental position becomes so common in the whole region after the seventh century that the sole reason for identifying a particular sculpture as a dancing figure has been the presence or absence of this fundamental position. Nonetheless, the pose does not become a conventional stereotype until the seventh-eighth century in India. Although it appears first in a scene in Nagarjunakonda, Elura and in some dance sculpture of Pattadakal and Aihole, the first stylised depiction of the pose occurs in the famous scene of Tara dancing in the Aurangabad caves. The dance scenes of Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Deogarh, Sarnath, Gwalior capture a variety of other movements, which are precursors of *swastika, kunchita,* the *bhujangatrasita* and *vrshchika karana*-s, but the simple stylised movement of an out-turned position of the knees and the feet is conspicuous largely by its absence. Only Aihole, Elura and the Tara of Aurangabad begin to depict this.

In style and method of portraiture the Prambanan figures are a further growth from the monumental large-size figures of Elura. If the Prambanan sculptors had any models in sculpture, they seem to be more from Aihole, Pattadakal, than from Elura. This is borne out by a comparison of the treatment of the torso, the lower limbs and the whole concept of low-relief as opposed to the high relief of Elura. What is true of the cadences identified as the *valita* and the *ghurnita* is truer of the group of *karana*-s identified as the *urdhvajanu,* another stereotype

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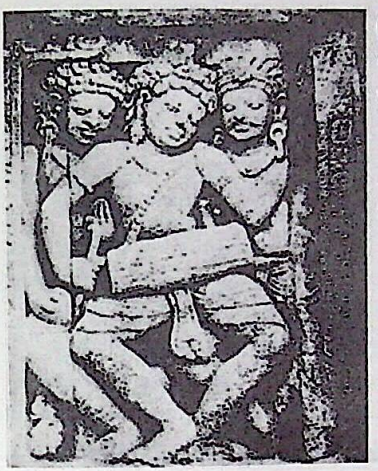

Fig. 1: From Prambanan, Java

Fig. 2: *Karana valita*, Prambanan temple

Photos Courtesy: Archaeological Survey of Indonesia

of the entire Asian region. The *urdhvajanu* does not appear in Elura: it does appear in the Virupaksha temple in Pattadakal (Zimmer, Pl. 304). In Prambanan, the sculptor's chief preoccupation appears to be with this particular pose, where one leg is static in a *kshipta* bent position and the other is elevated, with knee either at the level of the waist, or sometimes higher. The out-turned position of the knee and the foot is, however, never disturbed, nor is there a frontal elevation: extensions of the lifted leg are also unknown. Examples of the two stereotypes come from all parts of South East Asia, but for the purpose of a detailed examination, let us confine ourselves to a few examples of the sculptural depiction of the *valita, ghurnita* and the *urdhvajanu*.

Figure 1, from Lara Djonggrang, is clearly a position of the *valita karana,* with one foot in *samapada* and the other in *kunchita.* Both the drummer of Figure I and the dancer of Figure 2 hold a similar lower limb position. The difference in the treatment of the torso and the neck, however, results in giving the movement a different character. The example of Nalanda of a *kshipta* position hardly serves as a model, since it is a small niche figure. So also the two panels of dance in Sarnath could not have served as immediate models, judging from the three survivals. The Indonesian pose is easily more chiselled and stylised when compared to its predecessors in India. Close parallels are found in the temples of Brihadishvara, Chidambaram and Sarangapani.

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Fig. 3 : *Karana vikshiptakshipta* and *akshiptarechita*, Brihadishvara Temple, Tanjore

Fig. 4 : *Karana valita*, Brihadishvara Temple, Tanjore

Photos Courtesy: Archaeological Survey of India.

From Brihadishvara, we have many examples of the pose in *karana*-s identified by Sri T. Ramachandran as *akshipta rechita* (*Karana* 20, Figure 3), and *valita* (*Karana* 31, Figure 4). A comparison of Figure 2 and Figure 4 will reveal the many possibilities of variation within one group of *karana*-s. In Figure 2 the left foot is in *kunchita* and the torso is extended to the right as one unit. In Figure 4, the right foot is *kunchita* and the torso is extended to the left, but broken up into the lower waist and upper chest.

Fig 5

Fig 6

Fig 7

Fig 5: *Karana valita*, Gopuram, Chidambaram Temple
Fig. 6 : *Karana ghurnita*, Gopuram, Chidambaram Temple
Fig. 7 : *Karana ghurnita*, Sarangapani Temple, Kumbhakonam

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Fig 7(a) : Bronze figures from excavation site near Payama, Pagoda Srikshetra, Burma
Photo Courtesy: Archaeological Department of Burma

From Chidambaram we have two other examples, also of the *valita* and the *ghurnita karana* movement (Figures 5 & 6). From Sarangapani there is yet another variation (Figure 7): by the time of Sarangapani it is obvious that the stylisation is greater and some of the flow of the earlier examples has been lost. But the seven figures are all of a series and clearly show a similar approach to movement. Important evidence is provided by the group of bronze figures found in the Payama pagoda of Srikshetra (Fig 7a). Closely related to the *valita ghurnita* simple variety are the examples from all four temples of the *swastika* variety. In Prambanan, as many as 15 figures fall into this category; we include only two examples here (Figures 8 & 9). In Figure 8, the crossed foot maintains a ground contact and has one distinct *lata hasta.* Figure 9 depicts a loss of contact with the ground, with a *karihasta* position of one arm. The treatment of the torso and the bend of the arms results in two different movements, although the lower limb movement may be seen as two stages of the same movement. In Brihadishvara and in Chidambaram we come across this again, in *karana*-s identified by Sri T. Ramachandran as *ghurnita* (*Karana* 32, Figure 10) and as *parshvajanu* (*Karana* 73, Figure 11).

The more interesting set of reliefs, however, belong to the category of *karana*-s generally known as the *urdhvajanu, dandapaksha, dolapada,* etc.The first depictions of this are found in Pattadakal and then in Prambanan. In the latter, nearly twenty panels depict variations of a movement, whose chief characteristic has been mentioned before, i.e., one leg in *kshipta* with one

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samapada foot, and the other elevated sideways; weight is maintained by the leg in the *kshipta* position and the bent knee. Although the pose occurs in isolated examples in Indian sculpture in Virupaksha, it is conspicuous by its absence in Ajanta, Elura and Mammallapuram. Prambanan and the Pattadakal figures show great affinity of style-treatment. The elevated knee, or *urdhvajanu,* is perfectly depicted, with variations in torso and upper limb movements in Figures 12 and 13 from Prambanan. Other Indian examples are from Brihadishvara *Karana* 25 (Figure14) and *Karana* 34 (Figure15) identified as *urdhvajanu* and *dandapaksha*

F'g 8: *Karana ghurnita.* Prambanan, Java
Photo Courtesy: Archaeological Survey of Indonesia

by Sri T. Ramachandran. In Chidambaram there are many examples of it in the *karana*-s identified as *urdhvajanu, parshvajanu, dandapaksha, dolapada.* From Sarangapani also there are examples (Figures 16 & 17). A comparison will show that in the Sarangapani examples the static lower limb with the *samapada* is not in such an acute *kshipta* position as the other examples.

Thus, as in the case of the *valita/ghurnita* variety, in the *urdhvajanu* variety also it would appear that the sculptures of Pattadakal Virupaksha are closer to Prambanan than those of Elura.

As has been mentioned earlier, the *karana*-s are cadences of movement, deriving their name either from the *chari*-s, *bhaumi* or *akashiki, hasta*-s, or suggest the chief characteristic of a circular movement through the use of the word *rechita* or *vivartita.* The depiction of the *karana*-s in sculpture thus can at best be an identification of the chief characteristic and not the whole movement: often either the initial or intermediary or final position is captured. The three groups of the dancing figures illustrate a remarkable affinity in the principles of

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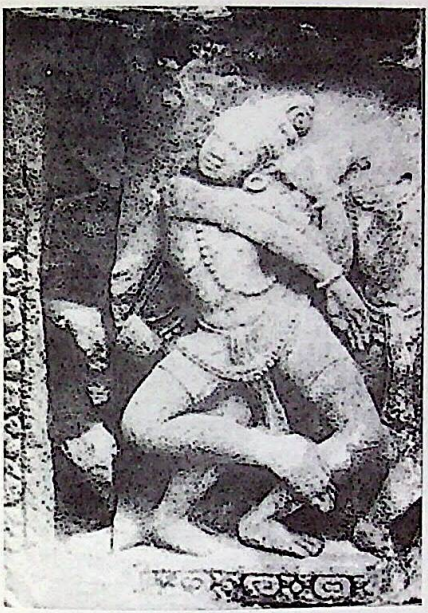

Fig 9: Prambanan, Java
Photo Courtesy:
Archaeological Survey of Indonesia.

movement. Judging from these examples and others of the ninth and tenth centuries of the dancing apsaras in Angkor Thom (Figures 18 & 19), of the dancing Tara from the Lopburi period, eleventh century, Thailand (Figure 20), it would appear that in the ninth century the whole region, ranging from Western India and Burma to Cambodia and Java, had evolved a dance style which followed identical principles of movement. It would also appear that there was an active dialogue which was not a one-way process of either copying or influence: it was interaction on the level of form and technique. Even from this sampling it would not be too much to conclude that the style of dance which seems to have emerged in the eighteenth century, beginning with the figure of the Tara in the Aurangabad caves, had a fundamental pose of the *ardhamandali,* which was common to all regions especially India, Indonesia, Cambodia,Thailand and Burma

Fig. 10 : *Karana ghurnita,* Brihadishvara Temple, Tanjore

Fig. 11 : *Karana parshvajanu,* Brihadishvara Temple, Tanjore

Photos Courtesy: Archeological Survey of India

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Fig. 12: *Karana urdhvajanu,* Prambanan Temple

Fig. 13: *Karana urdhvajanu,* Prambanan Temple

Photos Courtesy: Archaeological Survey of Indonesia

also shared these fundamentals of the *kshipta* bend of the knees, with either both feet in *samapada* or those in which one foot is in *samapada* and the other in *kunchita* or *anchita.* From this fundamental position many other positions, many movements, whether of the *swastika* variety, or of uplifted foot of the *urdhvajanu, parshvajanu, dandapaksha,* or *dolapada* variety emerged. Examples from the Pathothamya temple, Pagan (Figure 21), from the Abeyedan

Fig. 14 : *Karana urdhvajanu,* Brihadishvara Temple, Tanjore

Fig. 15 : *Karana dandapaksha,* Brihadishvara temple, Tanjore

Photos Courtesy: Archaeological Survey of India

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Fig. 16 : *Karana urdhvajanu,*
Sarangapani Temple, Kumbhakonam

Fig. 17 : *Karana urdhvajanu,*
Sarangapani Temple; Kumbhakonam

Photos Courtesy: Archaeological Survey of India

Fig. 18 : *Karana dandapaksha,*
Apsaras from Angkor Thom, Cambodia
Photo Courtesy: University of Phnom Penh

temple, Pagan, and several examples from the Lopburi period of Thailand (Figure 22) will easily convince one of a common vocabulary of movement, which was built on the principle of the *bhanga*-s and *sutra*-s of Indian principle of conceiving the human form more as a structure of joints than of muscles and the relative tension and relaxation of the muscular system. The survivals of the dance styles in these countries, particularly in Indonesia (both Java and Bali), Thailand and Khmer, and aspects of Burma, further reinforce our impression that although there is a consanguinity of fundamental vision and execution in form and technique, there is regional distinctiveness. The stylisation in sculpture and in dance emerges from an adherence to the basic

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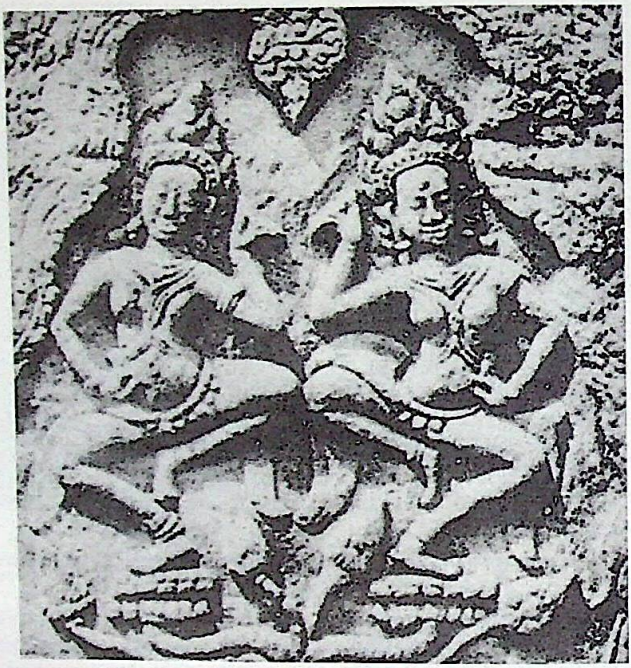

Fig. 19 Apsaras from Angkor Thom, Cambodia
Photo Courtesy: University of Phnom Penh

ardhamandali (akin to the *demi-plie* of ballet) position in all depictions of dance in sculpture and in contemporary classical styles. By consciously limiting the human body to this position, only certain physical movements were possible. Most common amongst these was the lifting of one leg or calf; the *urdhvajanu*, *parshvajanu* was a natural popular corollary. This is also pervasive in spite of the many variations in time and space. The *vrshchika* back extension was another possibility for the suggestion of dynamism.

It would be rather difficult to hazard a guess on the date or to map a precise chronology of the emergence of a style or styles in different parts of India and South East Asia, based on the *ardhamandali* position and the extensive use of the hands. Nor would it be possible to establish a chronology of the influence, in spite of all the work which has been done on the interaction between and amongst different cultures of South East Asia. The evidence provided by dance styles and dance sculpture points to two clear conclusions. The human form was being considered as a geometrical motif and an impersonal treatment was being attempted. In technique formulation, although the *Natyashastra* had been written

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Fig. 20 : Tara bronze, Lopburi period, Thailand
Photo Courtesy:
National Museum, Bangkok

Fig. 21 : Figure from Pathothamya Temple, Pagan, Burma
Photo Courtesy:
Archaeological Department of Burma

Fig. 22 : Triloka Vijaya, Bronze, Lopburi period, Thailand
Photo Courtesy:
National Museum, Bangkok

in India in the early part of the Christian era, and although dance sculpture pervades the Indian scene, from Udayagiri to the Kailasa temple in Elura, the dance sculptures of the Prambanan temples had no precise Indian models:the closest were the sculptures of Pattadakal, Aihole, rather than Elura. Also, a companion of the Prambanan group of panels and of the others in Asia and other parts of India clearly reveals that although there was an active dialogue, there is no slavish imitation by any one group of artists. A comparison of the depiction of the same pose will convince one of the innumerable possibilities of interpretation and execution. There is hardly a repeat.

It has been suggested by some scholars that the Prambanan panels are of a series

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of the same type as Brihadishvara, Chidambaram and Sarangapani. A detailed examination of the sixty-two panels tells us that while they can be grouped under four or five broad categories of the *ardhamandali, urdhvajanu, prishthasvastika, vrshchika* and *valita,* they cannot be considered as a deliberate effort at notating movement of the type represented in Brihadishvara, Chidambaram and Sarangapani. In stylisation, in precision of execution, they are a most important landmark as they go between Elura, Aihole and Brihadishvara.

Notes

1 Stutterheim W., *The Rama Legend*, Vol. I & II, 1925.

2 Kempers, A. J. Bennet, *Art of Ancient Indonesia.* 1959.

3 Holt, Claire, *Art in Indonesia,* 1967.

4 Kempers, A. J. Bennet, *Ancient Indonesian Art,* page 60, plates 149-152.

5 Holt. Claire, *Art in Indonesia,* page 56 and footnotes.

6 Scheltema J. F., *Monumental Java,* pages 78-87.

7 Stutterheim W., *The Rama Legend* Text, Vol. I, Introduction.

S Vatsyayan, Kapila, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts,* 1968, Chapter on Sculpture and Dance.

9 Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy for 1954-1955, page 64. The temple was built between the 12th-15th centuries A.D.

10 Vatsyayan, Kapila, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts,* plates 133-134.

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Some Evidence of Dance in Pagan

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

In an article on the Dance Sculptures of Lara-Djonggrang (Prambanan)[1], we had made a passing reference to two types of dancing figures from Burma. The first was a group of five bronze figures found in the Payama pagoda of Srikshetra (ninth century) and the other, a painting of a dancer from the Pathothamya (also spelt as Pahto-thamya) temple (eleventh century).

In addition to the evidence found in Srikshetra and in Pathothamya, there are examples from many other sites in Burma (specially Pagan) which speak of a flourishing tradition of music and dance. These examples of bronze, terracotta figures, wood carvings and wall painting clearly reflect an unmistakable affinity of approach towards movement articulation patterns within the geographical region comprising India, Sri Lanka and Burma. These are also allied to the prolific evidence of the dance found in Champa, Angkor and Prambanan, and the sites of the Lopburi period in Thailand.

In the article referred to above a comparative study was attempted on two categories of movement, cadences (*Karanas*) identified as the *ghurnita, valita* and the *urdhvajanu* of the *Natyashastra* system. In this paper we propose to focus our attention on the Burmese examples in relation to examples in other parts of contemporary Asia, more specifically India and Sri Lanka.

The example in bronze of the group of musicians and dancers from Srikshetra referred to above is important from many points of view. Scholars have spoken of these most spectacular finds of bronzes as evidence in the plastic arts to support the description of a visit by a Pyu mission (including a music and dance

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troupe) in the Chinese annals (802 A.D.). A close look at these small figurines (all only $4^{1/2}$" in height) reveals quite clearly that, in the manner of their treatment of mass, volume, the musical instruments and the stance of the dancer (the fourth figure from left), they are closer to the 'Indian type' (used here only for the sake of convenience) rather than to the 'Chinese' models. A very different class of musical instruments and movement patterns emerges in the post-fourteenth and fifteenth century paintings of Burma and for these we do not find Indian parallels. In this early period, roughly from the ninth to the twelfth century, there are many examples of music and dance (in both sculpture and painting) which convince us of an allied tradition of music and dance in many parts of Asia, extending from India to Champa, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Burma, but excluding China, Japan, and Korea. The Srikshetra are perhaps the earliest examples in bronze of this pan-Asian or South-East Asian type of movement pattern. This finding supports, in part though not fully, the conclusions reached by art historians in context of the stylistic features of the stone and bronze sculptures and paintings of Pagan.[2] The Srikshetra group of five is distinctly a music and dance ensemble where the musicians dance along with the dancer. The last figure, identified as the dwarf by Aung Thaw is obviously the counterpart of the *vidushaka* or the *gana* figures found from the earliest time in many scenes relating to music and dance in India. A child, dwarf or *vidushaka* often accompanies the ensemble. In the Bharhut ensemble of musicians and dancers, the child figure is given great prominence. The Srikshetra group comprises a flutist, a drummer, and a cymbal player (or a *tala* keeper). These are the indispensable accompanists in most music and dance scenes found in the Indian sub-continent. Of great interest

Bronze figures from excavation site near Payama, Pagoda Srikshetra, Burma.
Photo Courtesy: Archaeological Department of Burma

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amongst these is the drummer. His animated pose can be easily identified as a *svastika chari* position in an *abhanga:* he plays the drum by crossing his arms. The crossing of the arm to play on the drum is a common feature of virtuosity among drummers and it can be witnessed in many dance performances in different parts of India. The drum, however, cannot be called a simple mridanga or a madala: its shape makes us believe that this is a percussion instrument akin to the *ghumara* found in Odisha, where only one end is covered by animal hide. The symmetrical cylindrical barrel-type of drum is seen in other examples of Burma, of a slightly later period but not in the present example. May we suggest that this is a distant precursor of the Burmese Ozi? The flutist's pose is in a clear *abhanga,* which with a deeper inflexion of the knee would have become a stylized *tribhanga.* The deflection of the hip, the counter-movement of the torso and the bend of the neck, along with the diagonal of the *hasta*-s (in *ardhamushti*) are clearly Indian features of the sixth and seventh centuries. What is true of the drummer and the flutist is also true of the cymbal player, who performs an important role. He faces the instrumentalists and is obviously directing them. The pose of the dancer; we have already identified as one belonging to the *ghurnita* and *valita* group with an *ardhamandali.* One foot is in an out-turned *sampada*, the other in *kunchita* and the arms are in *uromandala*. This figure is perhaps one of the first metal images which captures a moment of dance perfectly. All the Indian examples of dance figures in bronze belong to a later period.

After the Chinese had sacked a Pyu capital, Srikshetra began to decline by the ninth century. It was only after the Pyu gradually merged with the Burmese that Pagan emerged as the capital of unified Burma in the eleventh century. After Srikshetra the three most important sites besides others (from the point of view of music and dance) are from Pagan, namely the Pathothamya, the Shwezigon Pagoda (wooden door-frames), the Abeyadana temple tondoes of deities and the Abeyadana paintings of musicians and dancers. A few Nanda plaques are also of some relevance for a study of the delineation of the movement patterns. Besides there are some dance scenes in the Kabyaukki, the Nagayon and the Myinpagu temples.

Amongst these, the reliefs on the wooden door-frames of the Shwezigon Pagoda constitute one category. The paintings of the Pathothamya and the Abeyadana represent a different but allied tradition, and constitute a second group.

The Pathothamya is ascribed by some scholars to the tenth and by others to the reign of Kyanzittha, on account of the old Mon writing and the fact that the content of the paintings is largely based on the Sinhalese Tipatak. After taking

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various arguments into account, Luce suggests a date of 1080 A.D. for this important site.[5] Aung Thaw agrees with this date and places it immediately before Kyanzittha (1084-1112 A.D.). Dr. Ray, however, believes that it belongs to the tenth century.

The temple, as is well known, stands facing east inside Pagan city near the south wall of the west side of Nat-hlaunggyaung. On the outer wall of the northern corridor is a scene relating to Gautama's tonsure. Close to it, on the south wall of the west roof shrine is a painting of two ministers in an attitude of prayer. Similar paintings of ministers in a kneeling position are seen in the east wall of the south roof shrine, and the west wall on the same south roof shrine. On the west wall are two paintings, one of a drummer and the other of a female dancer. The gloss in Mon which corresponds to these paintings reads roughly thus, "Gotama sees the nautches who..."[6] Luce, in his impressively documented study, observes, "The lowest panels, showing the life of the Buddha impress me as rich and deep in colour, and sometimes grand in design: but distant and dim and vague until the work of fixing and cleaning is accomplished. Such suspended judgment applies particularly to Pathomaya, which set the standard in painting for the later temples".[7]

While the paintings of ministers is an attitude of prayer and those which illustrate the Kaladevila Twin Miracle[8] are interesting and significant for a comparative study of the stylistic features of mural painting in India and Burma, our concern here is with two figures–one of a dancer and the other of a drummer. In the article on Prambanan sculptures[9] we had identified the female dancer's pose as being in the popular *urdhvajanu* with a *dola* or *lata hasta* of the *Natyashastra* tradition. The stance of the drummer (Fig.1), the shape and size of his drum, and the entire countenance is interesting from another point of view. In sharp contrast to the small almost pot-bellied drum of the Srikshetra bronze figure, here is a fully developed mridanga, like the one which we began

Fig. 1 A drummer from Pathothamya (1080 A.D. pre-Kyanzittha period)

Fig. 1(a) A female dancer from Pathothamya

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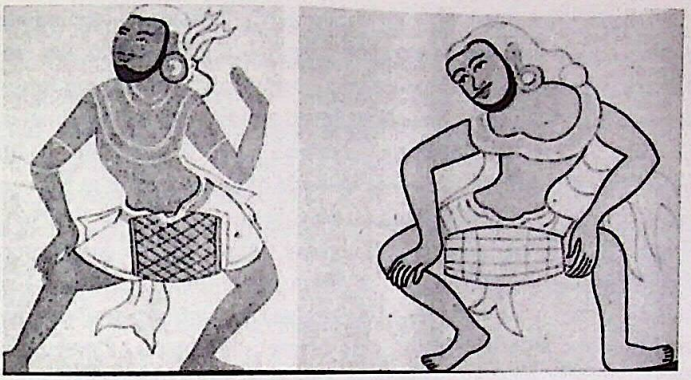

Fig. 2 & Fig. 3 Drummers from Abeyadana (Kyanzittha period)

to encounter in Indian sculpture (but not Indian painting) of the ninth and tenth centuries. It is a variety of khol which has always been popular in Eastern India, but is unlike the cylindrical pakhavaja-type of drum which we find in the Prambanan sculptures.[10] Although there are a few specimens of this type of drum in early Indian sculpture, its popularity can be witnessed after the ninth century. In most early examples, there is a pair of vertical drums played largely by women. The horizontal drums are not tapering on either side.[11] The stance of the drummer is even more important, because this is a variation without doubt of the *mandala sthana* of the *Natyashastra* system. The *mandala sthana* is defined by Bharata as an initial position where the feet are placed obliquely (outwards and sideways) and there is a four *tala* distance between the two feet. The knees should be bent in *kshipta* and the level should be low.[12] The balancing of the arms, the gestures of the hands are common features of numerous dance styles which are prevalent

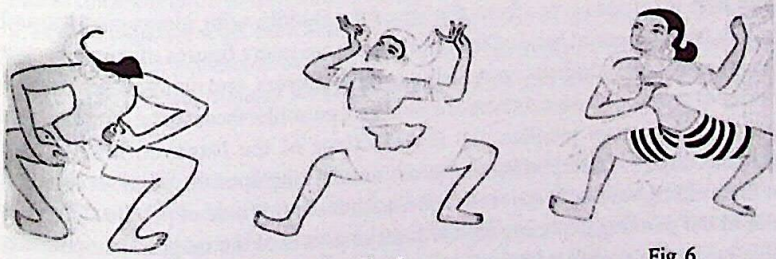

Fig. 4 Fig. 5 Fig. 6

Fig. 4 A cymbal player from Abeyadana in *mandala sthana*
Fig. 5 A conch player from Abeyadana in *mandala sthana*
Fig. 6 A female dancer from Abeyadana in *mandala sthana*

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all over South-East Asia. Although the tradition of a drummer, dancing along with the dancer has been lost to Javanese, Balinese, Cambodian and most classical styles in India, it continues in Sinhalese dancing and in some forms of Indian dancing. In Kathakali, the madala is played standing but the drummer does not dance along with the dancer. In the Assamiya Sattra dancing, the tradition continues and, of course, there is the whole world of pung playing in Manipuri. The dancer-drummer of Pathothamya has many distinctive features which have close affinities with both Indian and Sinhalese figures of the contemporary period. Nevertheless the square erect position of the torso, near three-fourth face without a pointed nose or pinched cheeks, and the coiffure recall sculptures in Sri Lanka,but have little in common with the stylistic features of the paintings of the Jaina school or what has been termed Western Indian school. For Indian parallels one would have to look at the sculptural reliefs rather than examples of painting. We have not been able to locate a similar stance in any Early Bengal painting.

To the period of Kyanzittha belong the important monuments of Shwezigon Pagoda (possibly1086 A.D.)with the carved wooden frames, the paintings of the Nagayon temple and the Abeyadana painting.

While the Shwezigon Pagoda presents very valuable evidence relating to music and dance in its wood carvings, the other two pagodas are full of murals on the life of the Buddha painted on the walls of the corridors. Kyanzittha built the Nagayon Pagoda (circa1090 A.D.). It is known for its pinnacle which is shaped like a mitre and for its curvilinear roofs and square terraces. The outer walls of the shrine and the corridors are filled with stone sculptures depicting Buddha's life before attaining enlightment. The inner walls of the corridor with a fine plinth moulding, illustrate scenes from the life of the Buddha with glosses in Mon and Pali. In the low central band of the plinth, there are many figures of dancers, men and women, and musicians comprising cymbal players, and many who play on a variety of drums.The dancers here are all in groups unlike those in the Pathothamya and the Abeyadana temples. All the paintings of the Nagayon temple[13] are characterized by overcrowding of figures, each falling upon the other: every inch of the painting surface is covered with a countless multitude of people. This is as true of the painting depicting the earthquake as it is of the magnificent painting illustrating Sonananda's battle scenes.[14] The dance scenes also reflect the same approach. The sense of movement in the scenes of battle and earthquake is, as it were, continued in the animated movements of the dancers, male and female. The scenes convey a powerful sense of drama, as opposed to dance proper.

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Scholars have considered this temple as a prototype of the Ananda temple (Nanda) and its thematic content follows the Sinhalese Theravada school. It is a pity that it is impossible to photograph these panels in their present condition. Nevertheless they are significant from many points of view. Judging from the stylistic features of these paintings it is obvious that although they are contemporaneous with the earliest layer of the Brihadishvara temple, the inner walls of the *garbhagraha* and the paintings of Elura of the later period (commonly termed as Jaina paintings), they have very little in common with their Indian counterparts. Neither the spatial division of the wall area nor the facial types are a direct imitation of Indian traditions. It is a family resemblance and no more.

The Abeyadana, a much smaller temple than the Nagayon, stands one hundred yards to the north-west of the latter. Both temples face north towards Pagan, and are at the top of the Myinpagan village, on rising ground. This temple is also ascribed to Kyanzittha although scholars now agree that it may possibly have been built by his chief queen. [15] It closely follows the plan of the Nagayon temple with sloping roofs and perforated windows.

Instead of the *shikhara* of the Nagayon it has a bell-shaped *stupa* above the terraces. Again, unlike the Nagayon, there are no niches for images of the Buddha. Instead we encounter a large seated Buddha in the sanctum. Mural paintings fill the outer walls of the corridor as also the inner walls. While the outer walls illustrate scenes of the Boddhisattvas, the inner walls portray many Hindu deities like Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Devi, etc. These deities of the west wall tondoes are seen on their respective *vahana*-s. Some of these are significant from the point of view of the flying motif and to these we shall shortly return. First we should like to draw attention to the pairs of celestial musicians, *gandharva*-s and *apsara*-s. Several pairs are seen, each with an interesting musical instrument. They occupy space above the tondoes on all three faces and on each side of the niche pediments. The height of these figures is about thirteen inches and nearly fifteen such pairs have been listed.

The styles of these flying musicians and dancers is vaguely reminiscent of similar scenes in Ajanta and Elura where, too, we have many examples of *gandharva*-s flying with clouds trailing behind them. Although the instruments they carry are not too easy to identify, we can see here a variety of gong, drums, pipes, flutes, etc. and an Indian vina and a six-stringed harp.[16] The vipanchi vina is seen in early Indian sculpture and continues in Burma to this day but has been abandoned in India.[17] The lower limb position of many of these flying figures in

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Abeyadana is not clear, but the impression of flying is beautifully captured though the treatment of the torso, which is gracefully extended.

More significant from our point of view are the tiny panels of musicians and dancers and drummers on the low band of the plinth moulding of the inner wall. They recall the musicians and dancers of the Nagayon temple. We have reproduced here five line drawings made by Mya Maung of the Archeological Department, Burma, since the photographs do not show the full contour of the figures clearly. There are two drummers (Figs.2 and 3) both in a variation of the *mandalasthana.* One holds a huddukka type of drum (Fig 2) and the other a mridanga type. A third is illustrated by Luce as Pl. 24(a) while the distance between the two feet of about five *tala*-s suggesting an open position and a vigorous movement, is common to all these figures, there is an interesting variety in their stances. The drummers appear to be in a moment of dance, almost at a point of commencing a kinetic sequence. The painter is successful in conveying a feeling, of dynamism through the suggestion of a partially extended leg; the other leg and foot carry the weight of the body. The relaxed extended torso reinforces this movement of the lower limbs and the tilt of the neck adds to its dynamic quality. All drummers belong to a single group and are close parallels of the Pathothamya pagoda. The cymbal player and the conch or horn blowers constitute another group. The cymbal (or *manjira*) player (Fig. 4) is in an *ardhamandali* (akin to the demi plie of western ballet): although it recalls to mind Indian examples there is a marked difference on account of the space between the two feet. The closest Indian parallels again come from sculpture rather than painting. The conch (or the horn) blower (Fig.5) is in a class by himself for here the distance between the two feet is the greatest, and had his right leg been fully extended, he would have achieved the *alidha sthana* perfectly. A female dancer (Fig 6) holds yet another musical instrument, a kind of triangle. She, too, is in absolute open low *mandala sthana* verging on the *alidha.* An examination of many other figures of the Abeyadana group reveals that the *urdhvajanu* does not appear to be popular with the artists of this pagoda. It is obvious from closely studying these examples that while there is a distinct continuity between the Pathothamya figures and those of the Abeyadana, there are some marked differences. The groups of musicians and dancers of the two pagodas have now to be compared with some significant examples from Srilanka, as there are no exact parallels in India of the contemporary period. There are many reliefs of musicians and dancers from Yapahuwa, Ganegoda and Embekke (belonging to the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries.) A close parallel of the *mandala sthana* is seen in a frieze of a dancers now in the Colombo Museum and in two other magnificent examples from

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Ganegoda.[20] A perfect example of the *mandala sthana* scene is in a carving from Embekke. Considered together, it would appear that many dance styles in the wide area (i.e. India, Sri Lanka and Burma) depended on their kinetic vocabulary on this important *sthana* of the *Natyashastra* system.

The examples from Pathomaya and Abeyadana are also significant for a comparative study of painting styles. While the bearded type, the scantily dressed dancers (male and female) exhibit an unmistakable affinity of approach towards a dance vocabulary, the Burmese painting techniques here cannot be identified as having stylistic features which can be considered as counterparts of the Jaina or Western Indian schools of Indian painting (all are incidentally later in time than the Pagan examples). There are no extended eyes or further eyes and no profiles, so characteristic of early miniature painting commonly called Western Indian. Indeed it would also be difficult to identify many stylistic features which recall the later paintings of the Jaina School in Elura. This is borne out of a careful scrutiny of the dancer and musician panels, as well as the stylistic features of the celestial *gandharva*-s and *apsara*-s. Only vaguely are the figures of the dancers reminiscent of some Chola paintings of Tanjore. Some facial types recall those seen in Brihadishvara in the context of the story of Saint Sundara.

The facial features, the manner of drawing the deities on *vahana*-s placed in circular tondoes in contrast exhibit traits which link them with Indian paintings of a slightly later period. We venture to suggest that here affinities are closer to the early Eastern Indian paintings rather than the thirteenth-fourteenth century Western Indian paintings.[21] Even here the differences are as significant as the similarities and a second, a closer look is perhaps necessary before conclusive statements on a derived Burmese school can be made. All that can be said is that these are distinctive regional or national variations, within one large Asian family group.

For our purpose, we have to return to the 'flying motif' as one amongst many other motifs illustrative of this widespread Asian dialogue. In many scenes of this and other pagodas of Pagan are seen 'flying figures', the Buddha figure in arches, etc. In Pagan, as in India and other countries of Asia, this motif occurs repeatedly and in each case it incorporates the fundamental characteristics of a class of movement described by Bharata in the *Natyashastra* as the *vrshchika karana*. Although we have dealt with the subject elsewhere[22] in the context of Asian sculpture and Indian reliefs, here we include a few more examples from the mural paintings of Pagan to further support our argument about minor motifs being significant indicators of mobility patterns in Asia.

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Fig. 7 Buddha with flying *gandharva*-s and kneeling priests

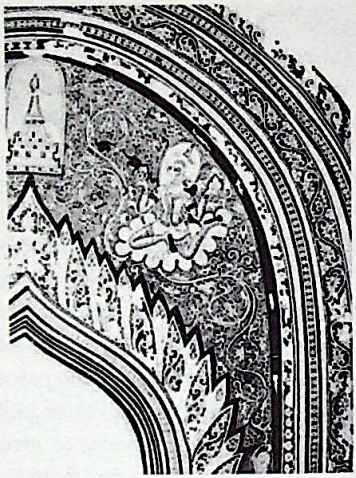

Fig. 8 Flying figure. Pagoda No. 698

A beautiful example of this motif may be seen in Abeyadana on the outer walls of the corridor, where a pair of such flying musicians and dancers adorns the Buddha on either side (Fig 7). The clouds, the tendrils of the lotus provide the frame for these floating figures amidst the many wavy patterns, the contours of flying figures are precisely executed in the *vrshchika kuttila karana* of the *Natyashastra* tradition. Notice in contrast the two kneeling figures, which are distinctive to Pagan in many ways. While the flying motif continues in India until the fifteenth-sixteenth century, it is discarded in South East Asia in the thirteenth century. Although placed differently another important example is seen in Pagoda No. 698 (Fig.8), this time in an architectural arch. The foliage is more elaborate

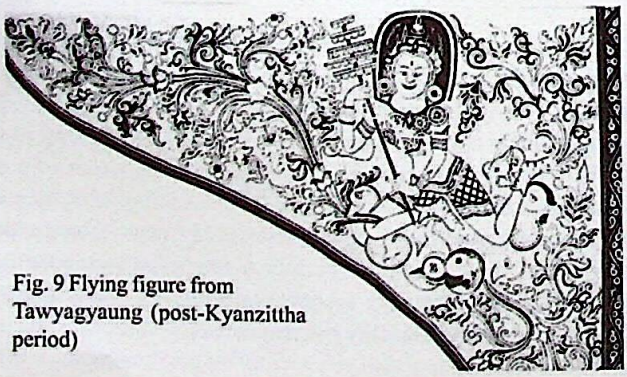

Fig. 9 Flying figure from Tawyagyaung (post-Kyanzittha period)

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Fig. 10 Kneeling figure with hands in *hamsasya* and *mrigasirasa* from Kondawgyi (post-Kyanzittha period)

and the space crowded with minute lines, but the figure of the flying *gandharva* emerges clear and unambiguous (Fig.8). In the Tawyagyaung Pagoda of a slightly later (i.e.post Kyanzittha) period the motif is repeated (Fig.9). The *gandharva* plays on a musical instrument which is difficult to identify but the pose is significant. The frontal full-face treatment is also significant. However, there is another type of kneeling pose with both legs infolded which is frequently seen in Pagan sculptures and paintings. This is insignificant or almost non-existent in Indian paintings of this period, both mural and miniature. It becomes, increasingly popular in South-East Asia and in Japan, but goes into oblivion in post-twelfth century Indian painting. It is this kneeling pattern with knees closed in front which links some important movements of Manipuri and Burmese dancing of a much later period. The Kondawgyi temple (twelfth-thirteenth century, Fig.10) provides us a typical example. The kneeling position is characteristic of the manner in which musicians sit in the South-East Asian and Japanese orchestra. This is in contrast to sitting *asana*-s found in Indian painting or seen today in traditional Indian concerts. These differences in sitting modes are so obvious that few art historians or others have cared to comment on them. However when one considers the cultural affinities and distinctiveness of several countries in Asia, these subtle differences are significant indicators of deeper concerns and attitudes. An interesting example is seen in Pagoda 163 (Fig.11) where both positions are used. By the fifteenth-sixteenth century only the kneeling position continues and the flying motif disappears. We find a significant example of this posture in a stone figure of a woman in Htukkan-thein Mrohaung (Fig.12) belonging to the fifteenth-sixteenth century. The monument is otherwise known for sculptures which are unlike any others found in Burma.[23]

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From the paintings of the Pathothamya and the Abeyadana we have to return now to the examples, some elegant and others somewhat gross, of the musicians and the dancers found in the carvings of the wooden door frames of the Shwezigon Pagoda. Besides, there is one important dance scene amongst the Nanda terrace Mahanipata Jataka tablets. The Shwezigon belong to the eleventh century, the Nanda terrace plaques to the twelfth century.

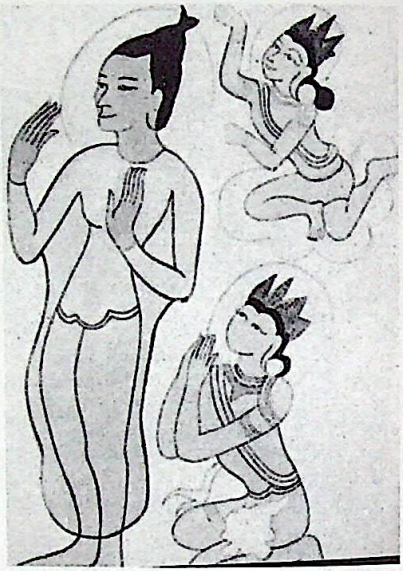

Fig. 11 Buddha with flying figure and kneeling figure. Pagoda No. 163

The Shwezigon Pagoda has also been dated by scholars to about 1086 A.D. and is attributed to Kyanzittha. The carved wooden door was found by Duroiselle[25] in the North *gandhakuti:* it is now in a tazaung on the east side of the south approach. Amongst these wooden frames are many significant sculptures, all supporting our argument that while there was an affinity of approach in dance movements in India, Sri Lanka and Burma in eleventh and twelfth centuries, it gradually gave place to a national distinctiveness from about the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries onwards. Continuities can be discerned in India, but radical changes take place in Burma after the fifteenth century.

Fig. 12 Kneeling figure in stone from Htukkan-thein Mrohaung (16th century)

Duroiselle give a vivid account of one of these figures.[26] "The middle piece consists of a half-naked figure dancing in an antique fashion. Here although the right leg which is bent has been placed a little too high in the air, the whole pose is quite natural and artistic", (Fig.18 (a)). Duroiselle also notices

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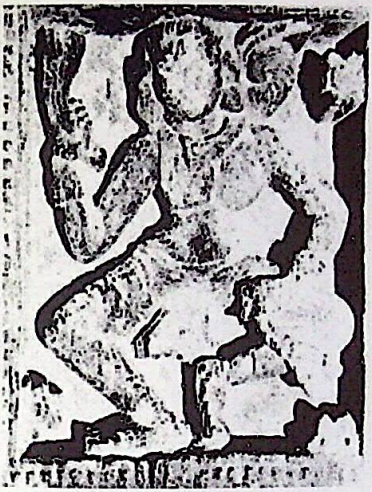

Fig. 13

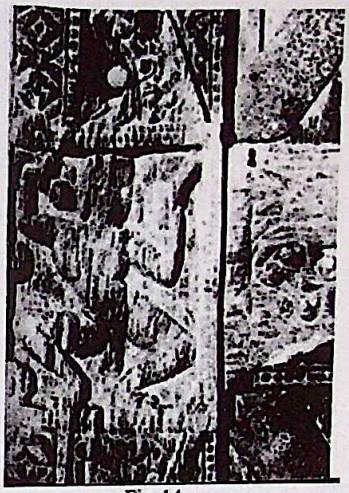

Fig. 14

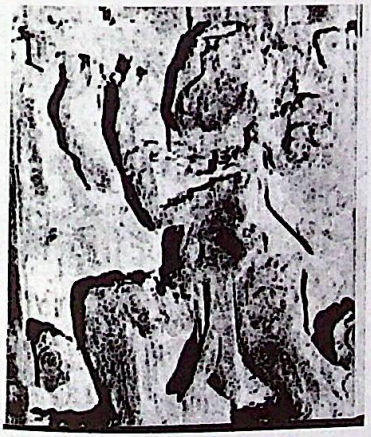

Fig. 15

Fig. 16

Fig. 13-16 Wooden carvings from door-frame from Shwezigon (Kyanzittha period)

"the figures of a man playing a clarionet, a man beating a drum and a woman dancing with gentle sway of her body". In the same report, he believes that these door-frames belong to the original pagoda and must be so dated. There are many figures in these door-frames which are of special interest to us. One of these (Fig.18) is in a clear *ardhamandali*.[27] One foot is placed in *samapada* with toes pointing sideways and the other in *kunchita*. This is a precise delineation of the

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Fig. 17 Wooden carvings from door-frame from Shwezigon (Kyanzittha period)

movements of the *ghurnita* and *valita* type *karana*-s described by us in the context of the Prambanan sculptures.[28] Her movements are in a characteristic flourish seen in many dance sculptures in India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia from the ninth century onwards. The present figure[30] may well be representing a movement of the *kudittamitta* type of present-day Bharatanatyam. In another (Fig.14) both feet are in *kunchita* or perhaps even in *agratala sanchara* and the lower limbs are in *ardhamandali* with a clear *kshipta* movement of the knees. The dancer may well be executing a *tai hat tai adavu* sequence of Bharatanatyam or what Bharata describes as *udghattita.*

A third figure (Fig.15) is depicted as if moving sideways and this we may identify as a *parshvagata* movement although it is not a very elegant example. A musician is seen playing an instrument in a movement which is very close to the *kunchita* movement. This is often seen in Indian sculpture. Finally there are two others which are representations of the dynamic *vrshchika karana* movement. In one (Fig. 16) there is one infolded knee and the other leg is extended back. The calf is raised so that the foot is at shoulder level. One arm is in the position of the *uromandala hasta* and the other is in a movement of the *dola hasta* crossing the torso thus making it an excellent example of the *karihasta* position. The relief is a beautiful example of an arrested moment of the dance where the neck, arm and the leg movements are harmoniously balanced through a series of diagonals. In the matter of its sculptural quality, it is a close second to all that we see in Indian stone relief of the period of Khajuraho in particular and

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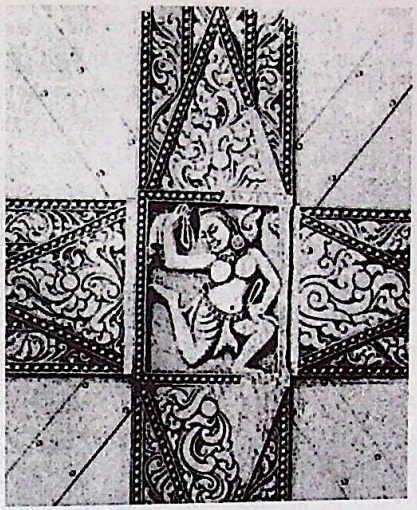

Fig. 18a

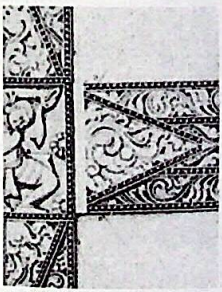

Fig. 18

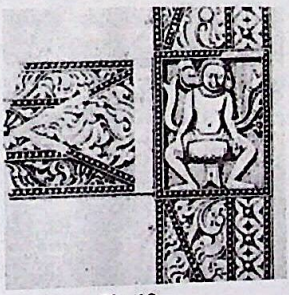

Fig. 19

Fig. 19a

Fig. 18 & 18(a) Line Drawings based on wood-carvings in Shwezigon
Fig. 19 & 19(a) — do— *Ardhamandali,* but an intermediary stage

the somewhat earlier one in Aihole. Yet another figure is similar. It also follows the same principles of articulation of the limbs (Fig.17) although it does not have the same degree of dynamism, on account of an absence of a tilt of the head and the equal degree of dynamism, on account of an absence of a tilt of the head and the position of the arms. In another frieze we see a powerful movement of the *dola hasta* and an uplifted *urdhvajanu* with a perfect *ardhamandali* recalling Indian examples from Paharapur (Fig.18). The extended torso, the contrary movement of the neck and the static *ardhamandali* of the lower limbs, give this relief a rare power. The drummers of these panels are all rather dull and formal in comparison. They are frontal figures with either an *ardhamandali* (Fig. 19) or a *mandala sthana* (Fig19a) and have none of the exhuberance of the drummers of the Pathothamya or the Abeyadana painted figures.

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Finally we have to draw attention to the relief on the Nanda terraces of the Mahanipata Jataka belonging to the later part of Kyanzittha's reign (circa 1105 A.D.) where there is a chiseled depiction of the *urdhavajanu* movement with one foot in *kunchita* and a *kshipta* of the legs, and the other leg elevated in an *urdhvajanu*. This is perhaps the most sophisticated example of a dancer in the Indian style which we encounter in Pagan, and is perhaps the last (figure 20). This scene belongs to the Mahanipata Jataka and is seen in the second terrace from top on the west face between the south-west corner and the centre. It represents an episode from the Bhuridatta Jataka: the legend below has been translated by Luce, Cowell and others and reads as follows: "Bhuridatta keeps the precepts in the garden." Many plaques depict the story of the Boddhisattva in the Naga country.

Fig. 20 Nanda terrace, Mahanipata Jataka tablets
Dance scene (12th century)

A comparison of these examples with those found in Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia lead us to conclude that notwithstanding regional distinctiveness, there was a pervasive dance style which was popular in many parts of Asia. It evolved by adopting two basic positions or *sthana*-s of the *Natyshastra* system, namely the *ardhamandali* (a close second to the *Vaishnava sthana*) and the *mandala sthana*. From these two basic stances (or what we may call the first and second demi plie of the western classical ballet) developed many movements. Popular

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amongst the movements which evolved from the *ardhamandali* or the *Vaishnava sthana* was the *ghurnita, valita, chatura*, etc. as one group, and the *apakranta, urdhvajanu,* and *parshvajanu* as a second group. The *mandala sthana* gave rise to a variety of movements, which are today recognized as the *chauka* in some Indian styles such as the Mayurbhanj Chhau and the Purulia Chhau (known as the *bhuja mura* in the latter) and seen as the basic stance of Kathakali, Ottanthulal and Javanese dance styles, and, used in Odissi. In Sri Lanka the basic position of the *mandala sthana* continued in aspects of later Kandyan and Ottanthulal dancing but was given up in Burmese dancing of the post-fifteenth to sixteenth century. The *vrshchika karana* movements were equally popular: they continued to be incorporated in certain aspects of later Burmese dancing as is obvious from movements in the Burmese oil-lamp yein dances and some other Burmese forms but not quite as popular in the Indian classical styles. The movement continued in India in forms in Chhau and in Thai dancing in the group called by the generic term *kinnari* movements. No examples of the *lalatatilaka* or other *vrshchika karana* are found in post sixteenth century Indian painting. The *ardhamandali* and the *mandala sthana* also gradually gave place to a standing erect position in India as is evident in the late Rajasthani and Pahari schools. In Burma they were replaced by movement patterns of the late Ava school.

It is important to remember that what is true of the portrayal of certain movement patterns of dance does not necessarily hold good for the stylistic features of the paintings. Although our examples clearly bear out that there was a pan-Asian vocabulary of dance, these very examples tell us of a comparatively more autochthonous treatment of line and colour. It has perhaps been an oversimplification to conclude that Pagan painting styles of the early period (i.e until Kyanzittha) were directly related to painting styles of contemporary India, particularly Western Indian painting.[32] The paintings of Pathomaya and Abeyadana are a category apart from those seen in the Payathon-zu, Minnanthu Nandamannya, all belonging to the late twelfth, thirteenth and early fourteenth

Fig. 21 Procession scene possibly of daughters of Mara, Nandamannya Minnanthu, late twelfth, early thirteenth century

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centuries. The pointed nose and the impression of an extended or further eye (with the important difference that there are no profiles here) begin in this period and appear to have a rather short life.

Fig. 22 Copy of wall painting from Payathon-zu

The procession of young and old women (Fig. 21) and two other scenes from Payathon-zu Pagan (Figs. 22 and 23) will make it clear that although the pointed nose, the squat faces, the near emergence of an extended eye recall Indian developments, the stances of the men and women, and the treatment of space is quite different from anything we encounter in India in the contemporary period. The crossing of feet in *svastika* and the *karihasta* diagonal position of the hands and arms is reminiscent of Indian models, but unmistakably Burmese in form and style. The framed picture approach is absent in Nandamannya and is hardly explicitly evident in the examples of Payathon-zu Pagan. The crossing *karihasta* (Fig.22) is unpopular in Indian miniature painting, as also the rather special bending of the knees in front. Scholars have been led to seek close affinities perhaps only on account of the treatment of the face, its outline, the pointed nose and the semblance of an extended eye in the Payathon-zu Minnanthu Pagan group of paintings.

While the exact identification of the stylistic details of the paintings is not our direct concern here, it assumes importance in the context of tracing the history of movement patterns in India, Burma and Sri Lanka in the post-fourteenth and fifteenth century period. It also throws a flood of light on the possibilities of achieving an individual style within a largely shared framework. Soon in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries appears the Ava school which discards these traits almost in entirety and adopts a totally different compositional pattern.

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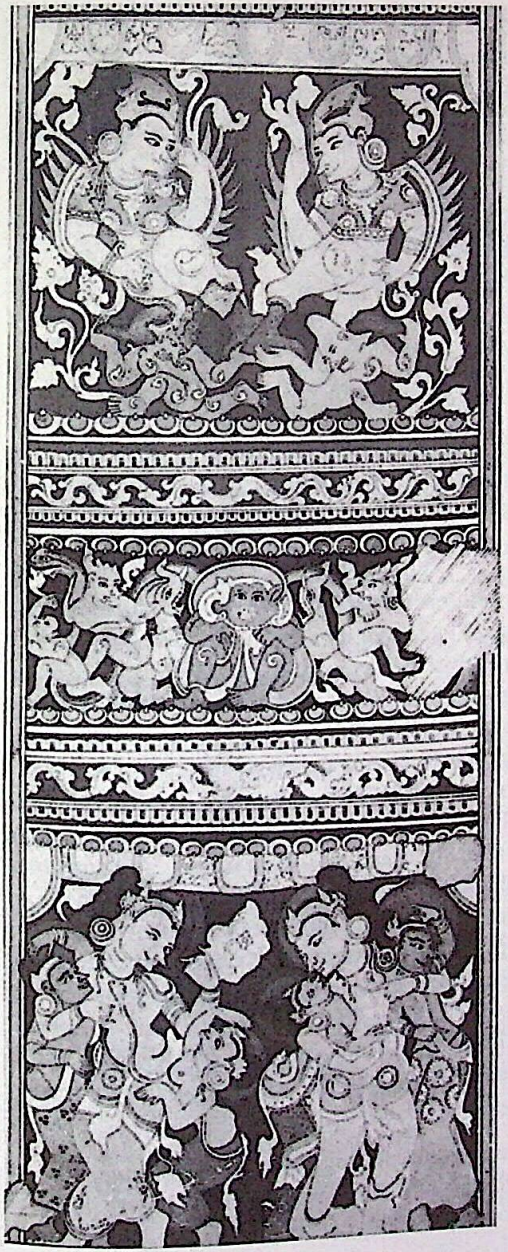

By the time of the Ava period, all the Indian; South-Asian characteristics recede into the background, and we begin to confront a style of painting which reflects an unmistakable radical departure from the early Pagan examples. The stances of the figures of the Pagan paintings give way to others which are far removed in ethos and style. Dr. Ray considers this as a gradual process of Burmanisation. The causes of these marked changes have to be sought in many socio-cultural developments in Burma. The consequential affinities with the visual arts of China, Korea and Japan are not too far to seek. An investigation of the contours of these changes would be valuable, but obviously demands an independent study. Here we include one single example from the Sulamani Pagoda (Fig.24) merely to bring home the contrast in the music and dance styles as reflected in Pagan and the Ava period.

Fig. 23 Copy of wall painting from Payathon-zu, Minnanthu, Pagan (post-Kyanzittha period).

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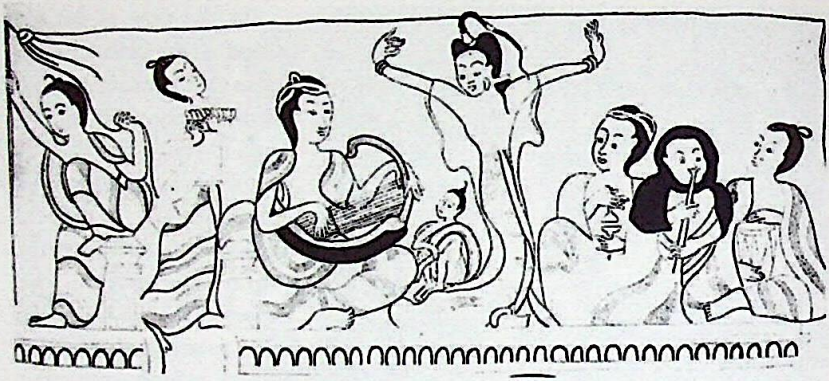

Fig. 24 A music and dance scene on the walls of the Sulamani Pagoda.

The Pagoda is ascribed to circa 1181, but the paintings belong to the 18th century

This one amongst several examples which speak of the consolidation of a new movement. We propose to trace the history of its origin and development in a subsequent article.

Here we may conclude by reiterating our initial observation that the wood-carvings, plaques and paintings of Pagan constitute valuable source material for a study of the extensive popularity of the *Natyashastra* system of movement in practically all parts of Asia (particularly what is today termed South-Asia and South-East Asia) between the ninth and twelfth centuries. A related deduction pertains to the stylistic features of the Pagan murals which suggest re-examination. From the few examples we have included, it is clear that there is a gradual change from the painting styles of Pathomaya and the Abeyadana Pagodas to those found in the Minnanthu such as the Nandamannya, Payathon-zu. Although both these have some affinities with Indian murals and miniature paintings in point of time they precede in some cases the Indian schools to which they have often been compared. Thus Pagan painting, like Pagan architecture, has to be broken up into smaller units. Changes appear to take place here in quick succession. Finally by the time of the Ava period, there is the evolution of a Burmese painting style and dance system which has little in common with contemporary Indian miniature painting of the sixteenth to seventeenth century or the dance style of the same period.

Note: Material for this study was gathered during a trip to Burma. Besides the monuments, thousands of line-drawings and photographs from the collections of the Archaeological Survey of Burma were examined. Useful discussions were

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also held with Aung Thaw, U Thein Han and other Burmese scholars. The material demands further attention from Indian and Burmese scholars. I am deeply indebted to the Archaeological Survey of Burma for their help and assistance.

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   Ray establishes three stages of Pagan painting. He believes that in the first stage it is only a component of Pala painting and that in the second and third stages the linear conception completely supersedes the plastic.

3. Thaw, Aung, *Historical Sites in Burma.* Ministry of Union Culture, Government of the Union of Burma, Sarpay Beikman Press, Rangoon, 1972, page 31. Henceforth abbreviated to Thaw, Aung, *HSB.*

4. Vatsyayan, Kapila, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts.* Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, 1968. See Fig. 58 from Bharhut, and Figs. 64 and 66 from Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. Henceforth abbreviated to Vatsyayan, K., *CIDLA.*

5. Luce, Gordon H., *Old Burma-Early Pagan.* Vols. I, II and III. Published by Artibus Asiae and the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1969, Vol. I, page 303. Henceforth abbreviated to Luce, G., *OBEP.* Also see Thaw, Aung, *HSB.* page 48.

6. Luce, *G, OBEP, Op. cit.*, page 305.

7. *Ibid,* page 309.

8. *Ibid,* Vol. III, Pls. 165 and 167.

9. *QJ* (NCPA) *Op. cit.*. Vol. VI, No. 1, Fig. 21.

10. *Ibid,* Fig. 1.

11. Vatsyayan, K., *CIDLA. Op. cit.*. Figs. 56 and 67. In the latter both types are seen; compare the drums in Pls. 71 and 76 (*CIDLA*) where a pair of vertical drums is the norm. From Khajuraho onwards only a horizontal drum (of the *alingya* type) becomes popular. See Figs. 77, 78, and 79. The closest Indian example is the panel from the Survaya temple ceiling (Fig. 92 of *CIDLA*).

    The different types of drums of the generic mridanga variety have been termed as pataha, karata, etc. as distinct from the huddukka type.

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12. *Natyashastra*, Chapter XV, 64-65. (Man Mohan Ghosh's translation).

13. Luce, G., *OBEP. Op. cit.*. Vol. III, Pls. 204 and 206. Also see Ray, *Op. cit.*, where he believes that these are like Eastern Indian paintings.

14. *Ibid*, Vol. I, pages 311-312 and Report of the Archaeological Survey of Burma, 1904, page 28.

15. Thaw, Aung, *HSB. Op. cit.*, page 51.

    Luce, G., *OBEP. Op. cit.*. Vol. I, page 321. These deductions are based on a sixteenth century inscription. See Archaeological Survey of Burma Report 1915, page 42.

16. Luce, G., *OBEP. Op. cit.*, Vol. I, page 326.

17. For examples of the vipanchi vina in Early Indian Sculpture, see Vatsyayan, K., *CIDLA. Op. cit.*,Figs. 61, 68 and 71.

18. Luce, G., *OBEP. Op. cit.*, Vol. III, Pl. 224. Although the lines are sharp, there is a terseness of execution. We cannot consider these as the counterparts of the later Elura flying figures where the lower limb positions are totally different. Dr. Ray again connects these also to Eastern Indian paintings.

19. See photographs of originals in Luce, G. *OBEP*. Op. cit. Vol III, Pl. 241 (b).

20. Godakumbura, C. E., *Sinhalese Dance and Music*. Archaeological Department of Colombo, Pamphlet 7, Figs. 12, 13, 14 and 15. The last is from Embekke, fourteenth century.

21. Compare illustrations of these deities in Luce, G., *OBEP. Op. cit.*. Vol. III, Pls. 229-237 and Indian examples illustrated in Moti Chandra, *Studies in Early Indian Painting*, Pls III, V, etc.

    In this respect we confirm Dr. Ray's findings regarding these paintings.

22. Vatsyayan, K., *CIDLA. Op. cit.*, Chapter II, pages 120-121 and Figs. 42 to 55 and Vatsyayan, K., *Vrishchika Karana. JISOA*, Vol. V (New Series), Vasudeva Saran Commemorative Number, Part II, 1972-73, pages 46-49.

23. Thaw, Aung, *HSB. Op. cit.*, page 119.

24. Luce, G., *OBEP. Op. cit.*, Vol. I, page 267, Vol. III, Pls. 179-182.

25. Archaeological Survey of Burma, 1923 Report, pages 12-13 and Pl. III, Figs. 2. 3, etc.

26. Archaeological Survey of Burma Report 1923, page 12, Pl. III, Fig. 2. The description refers to our Fig. 18(a) and Luce, G., *OBEP. Op. cit.*, Vol. III, Pl. 179(a). The pose of the dancer is in a *kunchita karana* of the *vrishchika* variety.

27. Luce, G., *OBEP. Op. cit.*, Vol. III, Pl. 182(c).

28. Vatsyayan, K., *QJ* (NCPA). *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, No. 1.

29. For *recheta* and *uromandala hasta*-s see illustrations of article quoted above.

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30. Luce, G., *OBEP., Op. cit.,* Vol. II, Pl. 182.

31. *Ibid,* Vol. III, Pl. 182(a).

For other examples of dance figures see Luce, G., *OBEP, Op. cit.,* Vol. III, Plates 262 from the So Min Gyi glazed work, Figs, a to e. All the figures have an *ardhamandali* or are in a *mandala sthana.* Some hold drums of the kind seen in the Shwezigon Pagoda. Also see Pl. 327(b) for another scene of dance in the Nanda tablets. The legend reads, "Alambayana makes Bhuridatta dance" Luce, G., *OBEP. Op: cit.,* Vol. II, page 151. For the Bhuridatta Jataka see Cowell, Vol. VI, p. 98 and see *Epigraphia Birmanica* II, Part I, pp. 85-86, Part II, Pl. LV, 233.

32. Thaw, Aung, *HSB. Op. cit.,* pages 88-91, for note on painting where he speaks of a strong Western Indian influence and that of the Varendra School of Bengal and Nepal. See Ray, *Op. cit.*. where he unlike Thaw believes that the paintings of the Payathon-zu and Nandamannya are a direct outcome of Eastern Indian linear conception. We agree that is closer to the Eastern Indian and Nepali but doubt whether all its stylistic features are a direct outcome.

Also see Moti Chandra, *Jaina Miniature Paintings from Western India,* Ahmedabad, 1949, pages 19-20, where he speaks of the Western Indian influence.

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Some Dance Sculptures from Champa

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

Despite the painstaking work done by both French and Vietnamese scholars, there continues to be considerable controversy regarding how exactly the Chams arrived in Annam (now Vietnam). Some historians are of the view that the Chams migrated by land and sea from India and Java; others suggest that the Chams were the indigenous inhabitants, a product of Dong-Son culture, who assimilated Hindu traits through active commercial trade with India.

Although the first written record of the Cham Kingdom is found in the Chinese annals around 192 A.D., the name Champa does not appear to have been used before the seventh century A.D. In the Chinese annals, the name used for the Kingdom is Lin Yi. The first inscriptional record of the spread of Hinduism in Champa is found in a Sanskrit inscription which describes a temple built in Mi-Son by a Cham king called Bhadravarman. The temple was dedicated to Shiva. Authorities date this inscription around 400 A.D.[1]; two other inscriptions in an identical script [2] lay down the limits of the domain consecrated to Shiva as Bhadreshvara and a third inscription in an Indonesian dialect speaks of the respect due to the *"naga* of the King".[3]

These inscriptions are perhaps the first record of the prevalence of the cult of Shiva, both as *linga* and as Shiva-Uma. Alongside is the valuable evidence of the prevalence of *naga* worship and Indonesian dialects.

The temple of Bhadravarman was, we are told, destroyed in a fire two centuries later; we also know that, during the sixth century, repeated Chinese raids on Annam destroyed the Chams' capital city of Tra-Kieu. It was, perhaps, in the

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course of one of these raids (during the reign of Rudravarman) that a fire destroyed this temple.

It was not until the reign of Kandarpadharma, son of Shambhuvarman and grandson of Rudravarman, that comparatively peaceful conditions prevailed in Mi-Son. Vikrantavarman, one of the successors of Kandarpadharma, was responsible for renewed building activity especially in Mi-Son at Tra-Kieu and in other places at Quang-Nam.[4] Now the worship of Vishnu also became popular. The most important architectural monuments were built in the seventh-eighth centuries. During this period the Chams had an active dialogue with Cambodia. In 857 A.D., a new dynasty appeared and made its capital at Indrapura. Indravarman II, a Buddhist king, was the founder of this kingdom and responsible for the building of temples of Dong-Duong. His reign popularised Mahayana Buddhism.

From the sixth to the ninth century many monuments, both Hindu and Buddhist, were built and the area around Hue and the Quang-Nam province became the centre of Cham Mi-Son and Dong-Duong art.

In the eleventh century the Annamites destroyed the capital of Indrapura, and a series of wars followed, involving the Khmers, Mongols and others. By the fourteenth century the Chams were a defeated people although at intermittent periods they did regain some of their lost territories. In the fifteenth century the Dai-Viets annexed the Binh-Dinh province and by 1600 the only trace of the Chams were the ruins of their magnificent temples. Many of them fled to Cambodia to escape massacre by the Dai-Viets and today only about 20,000 people are recognized as Chams in Vietnam.

The art of the Chams, or Champa Art as it is popularly known, has to be seen and attributed to different periods against this political background. Most art historians have discussed the arts of Champa in the context of three or four periods:

(i) The art of the period between the seventh and the ninth century; the emergence of a definite style;

(ii) The transitional period of the ninth and tenth centuries when many styles mingled;

(iii) The art period of the eleventh and twelfth centuries or what may be termed as a second peak period;

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(iv) The last period belonging to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

While this division is largely accepted, there is great variance regarding the descriptive labels used for these periods. Also Stern[5] suggests a chronology different from that of M. H. Parmentier.[6] The former lists these styles as follows:

Early style: about the eighth century

Prasat Damrei Krap: Cham temple in Khmer territory, slightly before 802 A. D.

Dong-Dzu O'ong style: second half of the ninth and first half of the tenth century.

Mi-Son A-1 style: probably beginning in the tenth century, and continuing into the eleventh century..

Transition to Binh-Dinh style: the eleventh century

Binh-Dinh style: the eleventh to the early part of the thirteenth century

Last style: the later part of the thirteenth to the seventeenth century.

We are concerned here with some outstanding examples of Cham art belonging to the first two periods, dated differently by scholars but all belonging to the period of the seventh to the tenth centuries and termed by some as the Mi-Son[7] and Dong-Dzu O'ong style, and by others as the early style and Hoa Lai[8] and the Dong-Dzu O'ong style.

Since little remains of any monument in its entirety, our deductions on the nature of these styles must be largely based on the sculptural evidence housed today in the Cham Museum in Danang, formerly Tourane, and some French collections. In the absence of substantial architectural remains, few sweeping generalisations can be made on the nature of the interaction between the three streams; Indian, Cambodian and whatever indigenous art that might have existed in the region prior to contact with India, China and Cambodia.

There has been much discussion amongst scholars ranging from Coedes, Hall, Quaritch-Wales to Parmentier and Stern on the historical developments and the resulting emergence of certain stylistic features of Cham art. Polarities of views have been a predominant feature of this debate. Some have contended that the Indian influence was near-pervasive in the early periods, while others have strongly opposed this view. Comparative studies have been made of architectural features and the floral motifs,[9] apart from the examination of images of deities and of

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iconography. Throughout this extensive discussion, covering nearly five decades of modern scholarship, little attention has been paid to the reliefs of the dancers and musicians (with the exception of one solitary figure)[10] from Champa.

As in previous accounts of Indonesian and Burmese art[11] we have restricted ourselves to an examination of this motif. The reliefs and other sculptural fragments of musicians and dancers provide excellent clues for identifying common distinctive features of the art of the South-East Asian states in relation to India. Each period and region exhibits an affinity of fundamental approach, with a distinctiveness of treatment within a larger framework. Also these reliefs of musicians and dancers help us in reconstructing a history of Asian dance forms and musical instruments.

Our examination of the sculpture of the dance in Borobudur, Prambanan in Indonesia, Srikshetra and Pagan in Burma[12] had showed that between the eighth and the eleventh century there was an extensive Asian tradition of the dance, which for lack of a better word we called an Indian model, based on the *Natyashastra* system of movement as opposed to a later tradition which may be termed as Chinese. In the context of Cham art, we do not have to make a distinction between an Indian (or pan-South-East Asian) and a Chinese model, although it would be appropriate to speak of this in the context of Vietnam in its totality. Until the Binh-Dinh style, attributed to the post-eleventh century, there are hardly any Chinese stylistic features, and of that period there are no sculptural remains of dance and music reliefs. We have thus to restrict ourselves to the Cham archaeological remains, revolving around the figures of musicians and dancers and some iconical images which have a bearing on our subject.

Also, as has been pointed out earlier, the evidence at our command is not sufficiently large to make sweeping generalisations. Nevertheless it is adequate for a comparative study of both the sculptural style and movement patterns of the different regions of South-East Asia.

In the Cham Museum are a number of sculptures, some reliefs and others, free standing figures, which incorporate the dance and music motif. Although all these belong to the period between the seventh to the eleventh century, there is a large measure of variance amongst scholars regarding their dating and provenance. To a large extent we have accepted the identification of Carl Heffley[13] regarding these sculptures but wherever there are doubts, they have been stated.

All the sculptures can be regrouped from the point of view of music and dance in accordance with the categorisation we have followed in an earlier work on this subject.[14]

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1. Figures which can be identified as either *dvarapala*-s or *shalabhanjika*-s found on door lintels, and *stambha*-s or bracket figures. Most of them assume a dance stance which can be identified in terms of Bharata's terminology, particularly the *chari*-s.

2. Flying figures or characters which carry floral offerings or minor deities such as *vidyadhara*-s or *gandharva*-s or *apsara-s*.

3. General collective dance scenes where an ensemble is seen either in the milieu of a court or in a procession.

4. Individual dancers who are in chiselled poses of the dance and those that can be identified as arresting a moment in a dance cadence termed *karana* in Bharata's terminology.

5. Figures of Shiva, Vishnu, Uma, Saraswati and other deities in their dancing aspect, namely the *nrittamurti*-s.

It is significant that all five categories of sculptural reliefs can be found amongst the collections of the Cham Museum; besides, there are these which appear to revolve around the character of a monkey. Whether we can associate the appearance of this figure with the story of the *Ramayana* or the character of Hanuman is doubtful in the absence of any evidence of a distinctively Cham version of the *Ramayana.*

From the first category, the most interesting are those of the *dvarapala*-s. We choose four amongst these: Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4.

All four figures are male, very much in the nature of *dvarapala*-s, but all with stances which can be clearly identified as the *chari*-s of the *Natyashastra* system. All four figures have some common features. Each rests his weight on one foot which is in *samapada,* with an erect leg and only a slight inward (towards the centre of the body) bend of the knee. In all cases the other leg is lifted high to the level of the waist and is entwined with a tree or a branch. One arm is lifted to touch the head and the other is extended across the entire torso in a diagonal movement, one which we easily recognize as the *kari hasta* of the Indian *shilpa* and *nritta* texts.

Each of these figures is also in a position which could be called the *samabhanga* or at best an *abhanga.* Within this general format many variations and differences begin to appear. In Figure 1, there is a slight turning in, of the foot on which the weight is held. The knee bend is fairly marked and the hip is slightly turned out.

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Fig 1

Fig 2

Fig 3

Fig 4

Fig. 1 : *Dvarapala*, sandstone, 25-30 inches.
Danang Museum; Mi-Son, early period, 7th-8th century.
Fig. 2: *Dvarapala*, sandstone, 30 inches.
Danang Museum; Mi-Son, early period, 7th-8th century.
Fig. 3: *Dvarapala*, sandstone, 30 inches.
Musee Guimet: Mi-Son, 7th-8th century.
Fig. 4: *Dvarapala*, sandstone, 30 inches.
Cham Museum, Danang; Tra-Kieu, 7th-8th century.

The knee of the raised leg is at the upper waist level. The torso turns, but faces frontally. So does the face of the *dvarapala*. One arm is lifted above the head, and the other arm swings across the torso. The elbow joint is emphasized and the hand holds the knee of the elevated leg. The sculptural features are reminiscent of early Pallava figures. Within a modest thirty-inches height, the artist has been able to recreate the impression of a massive five-foot figure. In Figure 2, while the stance is similar, the mood is quite different. This is a mellower, a more delicately carved figure. The knee is no longer turned in and the foot is also placed in such a manner that the toes face outwards and not towards the body. Indeed this change in the manner of placing the static leg endows a different quality to the entire movement: the extended arm also appears to be more naturally thrown across the body. The tension of Figure 1 is replaced by a calmer, more controlled disposition. The face is turned slightly to one side and this, too, adds to the sophistication of the figure. Although there is some difference in the tiara and headgear of the two figures, they are very close to each other. Both come from

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Tra-Kieu and must belong to a period between the eighth and early ninth century. The two others. Figures 3 and 4, are complementary: they are mirror images of Figures 1 and 2. They come from Quang-Nam: one is today in the Musee Guimet (Fig. 3) and the other in the Cham Museum (Fig. 4). In these figures we find that one leg is static. The *samapada* foot of one (Fig. 3) is clear, but the other has to be conjectured. Both figures are totally frontal and there is no impression here of a slight sideway movement, as in Figure 1. Again, while the general features and the framework are identical, there are many differences in execution. Figure 3 has a taut arm with an awkward elbow, as in Figure 1; but the arm of Figure 4 appears more natural and graceful. Considering these elements together, it is obvious that all these figures are in a stance which can be identified as the *ashvakranta chari* described by Bharata. We may recall here the famous Bodhgaya railing figure[15] as also the earlier depiction of the *chari* in both Bharhut and Sanchi. Of course, there are many *dvarapala*-s in this stance in Pallava art.[16] Nevertheless, from these Cham figures it is quite clear that there is a distinctive manner in which the artist interprets the movement. It would be difficult to find an exact parallel in an Indian figure, although the general impression of affinity is unmistakable. It is also clear that this affinity is not accidental, but is obviously accounted for by an identical compositional formula which is being followed.

The second category is that of reliefs, namely those which depict the flying figure and belong generally to what is known as the *vrshchika karana* variety of the *Natyashastra* system[17]; they are few and far between, judging by the survivals.

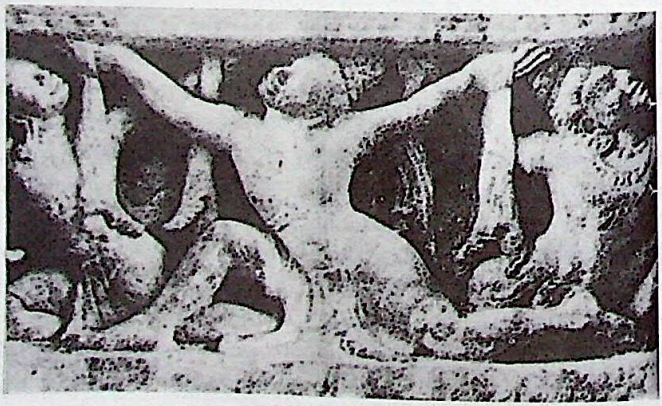

Fig. 4(a): Flying figure, 12 inches.
Cham Museum, Danang.

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It is, however, likely that many more existed. An outstanding example of the *vrshchika karana* movement is seen in a lintel from Mi-Son[18] of the seventh-eighth century (Fig. 4a). A number of *deva*-s are enclosed in a narrow panel. The central figure up holds the earth as if on two outspread hands. The two figures on either side are in *vrshchika lata,* while the middle figure is also in the same stance but with the important difference that the knee of the folded leg does not touch the ground and the calf of the other leg is extended in an outward direction. This recalls similar figures from Badami[19] but neither the compositional pattern nor the arrested movement is identical. Here again we are aware that although a common approach was being followed by the Indian and the Cham artist, there was a marked difference in portrayal. The stance of the middle figure makes it closer to the *kunchita karana* movement rather than to the *vrshchika lata.* The remarkable dynamism of the panel (in a space barely 12 inches high) speaks of highly skilled craftsmanship. This is not a slavish copy; neither is it based on a totally different approach to handling mass volume or stance. It would, therefore, be perhaps correct to deduce that such an achievement could have been possible only if that style of sculpture and dance had prevailed for a few decades or even centuries.

What is true of the flying figure in the *vrshchika karana* movement is even more true of the collective dance and music ensembles. The most important amongst these is a long panel from Mi-Son, attributable to the seventh-eighth century. The panel is nineteen inches in height. We see many musicians and dancers before a king and his retinue.

In one section (Fig. 5) we have a view of a full ensemble, comprising three musicians, two dancers and two attendant figures. One of these attendants holds a ceremonial umbrella or *chhatra;* the other holds another object, possibly a fly whisk. Amongst the musicians on the extreme left, there is one playing a pair of large cymbals (*jhanja* or *kansyatala*), another a wind instrument, and a third a small drum of the *alingya* variety. The *jhanja* or *kansyatala* player and the one playing the wind instrument stand; but the drummer sits with knees bent and calves folded in. This ensemble (of the drummer, the cymbals player and the player of the wind instrument) is significant from many points of view. The absence of any gong variety of percussion instruments, or string instruments of the *Vipanchi vina* or harp variety leads to the conclusion that there were few East Asian influences, and that Champa (like other parts of Asia) was following a pan-Asian model which can be traced back to the *Natyashastra* system. In contemporary Vietnamese musical instruments, the closest approximation to these are the *Chap-*

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Fig 5

Fig 6

Fig 7

Fig. 5-7: Panel of dancers, sandstone, height 19 inches
Cham Museum, Danang: Mi-Son, early period, 7th-8th century

choa (cymbals) and the *Trong-com* (drum). This group of three—a drummer, a flutist and a cymbals player—are found in many Indian reliefs belonging to the seventh century and continuing till the eleventh and twelfth centuries. However there are few sitting drummers in early medieval Indian sculpture.[20] In most South Indian examples, the drummer stands; nor are the musical accompanists solely male. In this relief, a clear distinction is made between the male musicians and the female dancers. The poses of the two dancers are significant. Their lower limb position is an *ardhamandali,* this is a clear derivation of the movements emerging from the *vaishnava sthana.*[21] The space between the two feet of the dancer closest to the musicians is greater than that of the one on the right. The latter holds her torso more tautly straight, with only a slight bend near the left, at the waist. The torso of the dancer on the left is extended upwards, with a greater bending of the waist. More important is the movement of the arms. Both the dancers have an *anjali hasta* position at a level higher than the head. To any

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dancer of the Indian tradition, this will recall the first position of *Alarippu* in Bharata Natyam, despite the difference, of course, in the torso movement. The whole panel is executed in low relief; but it is bold and clear. The composition is held together by the musicians on one side and the attendant figures on the other. It must be mentioned that there are no Indian sculptural counterparts of the same perod. The costume of the dancers is also important. They wear a dhoti which clings to the body, as in many Indian and Indonesian reliefs. However, the girdles and the ornaments are distinctive with no close Indian parallels, this is also true of the headgear which is quite different from anything in Indian (Pallava) or Khmer sculpture.

In another section of the same long panel from Mi-Son (Figs. 6 and 7), we see a king, seated on an *asana* and holding a sceptre or a sword, along with two attendants, one holding a *chhatra* and the other an ornamental large cup. Two dancers are seen in the middle of the panel and two musicians, a drummer and a *kansyatala* player, accompany them. Again the musicians are male and the dancers female. Although the drum is of an *alingya* variety, the posture of the drummer is markedly different from that of the drummer in the earlier panel (Fig. 5). Now he sits legs folded, frontally, and holds the drum in his lap. The cymbals are held to one side and this particular musician stands. The dancers have proceeded to execute another movement, although both are still in an *ardhamandali* position of the lower limbs. Indeed this *ardhamandali* is precise, with no space between the heels (which touch), and the toes face sideways. The torso is used as one unit, and is slightly bent forward in *abhunga*.[22] No longer are the arms and hands above their heads: now the right hand of the dancer is placed near the chest and the left is away from the body, at the level of the head, with elbows bent. The position could be attained in a number of arm movements and could also be a position of the *uromandala hasta*-s.[23] The dancer on the right looks straight ahead, the other dancer tilts her head and looks somewhat sideways. The movement of the neck could be identified as *tryashra*.[24] There is a marked change in the coiffure. The hair appears to be tied in a knot on one side and decorated with a circular hair ornament. The manner of this coiffure is strongly reminiscent of the typical coiffure of the *Mohiniyattam* dancers, although there are no other features which might link these dancers with those found in the late medieval sculptures and murals of Kerala. The comparison cannot, therefore, be extended beyond an affinity of hair styles. The movement of the dancers, however, has all the essential features of the pan-Asian style prevalent in all parts of South-East Asia and India in the post eighth century reliefs of music and dance. The impression of these panels is one of dignity, restraint and control, all characteristics

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of movements of a dance style which had obviously achieved a high degree of stylization and chiselling. These panels are amongst the finest examples of the Mi-Son style of the seventh-eighth century. There is here none of the artificial symmetry and formalism of the Khmer style; the panels are marked by a fresh naturalism which communicates both exuberance and control.

This will be clear if we compare these panels (Figs. 5, 6, and 7) with another panel from Quang-Nam of the same period or perhaps slightly later, that is about the eighth and ninth century (Fig. 8). Here we have ten dancers almost similar to the dance reliefs of the tenth and eleventh century from Central India.[25] There are no musicians and each of these dancers is in a dynamic movement of the dance. The lower limb *ardhamandali* is a characteristic fundamental position; however within this, there is a large variety. Four dancers are seen with one foot in *samapada*[26] and the other in *kunchita*[27] (with the toe touching the ground). Two have an *ardhamandali*, but both heels are raised suggesting an *udhgattita*[28] movement of the feet (toe-heel). Two execute a *svastika*[29] (crossing movement). It is obvious that the sculptor was attempting to capture as closely as possible a variety of foot contacts while adhering to the *ardhamandali* of the lower limbs. The torsos of these dancers are bent, some towards the right and others towards the left; so are their heads. There is hardly any dancer in the frontal movement seen in the Mi-Son pair of dancers. The upper limbs move in a variety of ways, but, except in the case of one dancer, the arms do not cross over to the other side of the body. In the case of many of the dancers, one hand is placed on the thigh in a *pataka hasta*, sometimes the palm faces out as in the case of the dancer, who is third from the left. There is only a vague suggestion of the wrist touching the thigh or waist. The other arm is lifted up, with elbows bent and forearm raised to the level of the shoulder or the head. The palm of the raised arm is invariably in a beautiful and clearly discernible *alapallava* or *alapadma*[30] away from the body. Only one dancer (the fourth from the left) swings her arm across the torso to the other side in a *kari-hasta*[31] or a *dola hasta*: the other is in an *alapadma*

Fig. 8: Relief of dancers, sandstone.
Cham Museum, Danang: Quang-Nam. 7th-8th century

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hasta. Altogether the panel is full of exuberant vitality and a sense of flowing movement from one dancer to the other. The upper limb movements can be identified as several variations of positions possible in the path of movement of the *uromandala hasta*-s. This relief can be profitably compared to the dancing *apsara*-s seen in the murals of the Brihadeshvara temple, Tanjore.

This dynamic movement pattern gives place to a new formalism in a slightly later period. While the *ardhamandali* continues, and we see a repetition of the movements seen in the Mi-Son early reliefs, the size of the reliefs is larger and the quality of the sculpture appears markedly different. To this category belong two reliefs (measuring 47 inches in height) from Thap-Mam. They are assigned to the thirteenth-fourteenth century[32] but stylistically they may have to be placed somewhat earlier, around the tenth to the eleventh century. The *ardhamandali* is

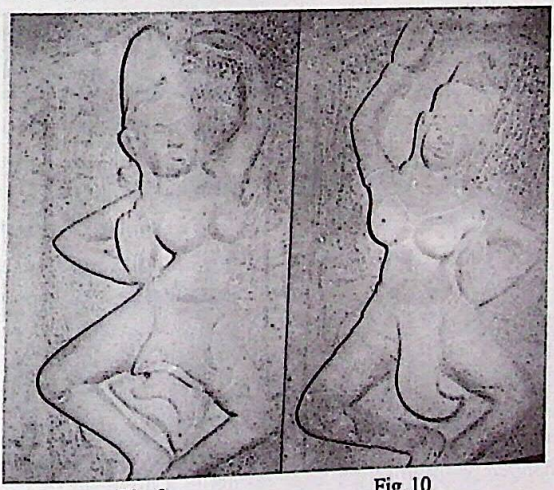

Fig. 9 Fig. 10

Fig. 9&10 : Reliefs of dancers, sandstone, height 47 inches.
Cham Museum, Danang; Thap-Mam, assigned to the 13th century

clear and precise in both (Figs. 9 and 10). Indeed it is a more outspread position of the knees than was noticed in the Mi-Son examples (Figs. 5, 6, and 7). An equally clear *kunchita* of one foot is seen where the toe is in contact with the ground. The other foot is in *samapada.* The weight of the body is held on this *samapada* foot. In Figure 9, the dancer holds her right hand in *pataka hasta* near her waist: the palms face away from the body. The other arm is lifted high, with the hand almost in contact with the conical headgear of the dancer. The

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Fig. 11

Fig. 12

Fig 11 & 12 : *Apsaras* dancing – bronzes
Musee Guimet; Khmer, 12th century

waist is bent at the right side of the dancer and the left side of the chest is consequently extended upwards. The neck movement is also a consequential movement of the waist. In the second figure, of the same size and belonging to the same period and style (Fig. 10), the lower limb position (including that of the feet) is almost identical, but the position of the hands is reversed. Now the left hand of the dancer is held near the waist, in a *hamsasya* and not in a *pataka:* the palm faces out. The dancer's right hand is high above the head, with the arm lifted. The changed position of the arms results in a different treatment of the body and the head. The plastic quality of both the figures is identical. Executed in low relief, the figures are precisely modelled with identical garments and flowing sashes which hang stiffly in the middle. There is no suggestion here of a tightly draped dhoti: instead it is a sewn garment reaching down to the knees. The string of pearls and girdle (Fig. 11) ornaments of the Mi-Son panels are replaced by symmetrical geometrical curves on the thighs. Scholars have commented on the strong Indo-Javanese and later Khmer influence on Champa art of the later period.[33] However, if we compare these figures with those of Khmer art of a slightly earlier period, the affinities and the differentiations will be clear. Although in bronze, one Khmer dancer is seen in an identical lower limb position (Fig. 11).

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There is an *ardhamandali*, a *samapada* and a *kunchita* foot. One hand is in *pataka* held near the waist, and the other arm is extended in a clear *dola hasta* with the hand at the level of the head, but away from the body. There is no attenuation of the torso; it is held straight, frontally, and so is the head. We see how much variety and distinctiveness was possible within the same general framework of style. Yet another Khmer bronze makes this even clearer: the lower limb position of the *ardhamandali* is common, and so is the *samapada* foot but one leg is lifted in an *urdhvajanu*;[34] there is no deflection whatsoever of the torso (Fig. 12). Even when the Khmer dancers bend their torsos and manifest a marked attenuation of the torso and flowing *uromandala* arms, as in the Bayon example (Fig. 13), the quality is quite different. From this comparison, it is possible to deduce that although there was a pan-Asian dance style, the regional differentiations were clear and unmistakable. This is evident even in contemporary dance styles. Although a commonality and affinity of approach in the treatment of the human body can be discerned when Javanese, Thai, Cambodian and some Indian dance forms are compared, no two are either identical or mere imitations of a single style. Perhaps the closest parallel is that of the evolution of the Brahmi script in all these regions: while certain fundamentals remained constant, there was a national genius which asserted itself in the development of particular scripts of the region. The same phenomenon is in evidence in sculpture and dance.

The finest dance sculpture from Champa is the famous pedestal from Tra-Kieu, assigned to the seventh-eighth centuries. This must be classified as individual dancers, each to be viewed separately. Many dancers adorn this high pedestal, which is 27 inches high. The height of the dancers is 21 inches. They are almost free standing figures and three dimensional in quality, not unlike the musician and dancer figures of *gandharva*-s and *vidyadhara*-s in the Duladeo temple of Khajuraho.[35] In plastic quality, they equal the best in Indian and Indonesian sculpture, exhibiting rare artistic skill. The static quality of the earlier figures

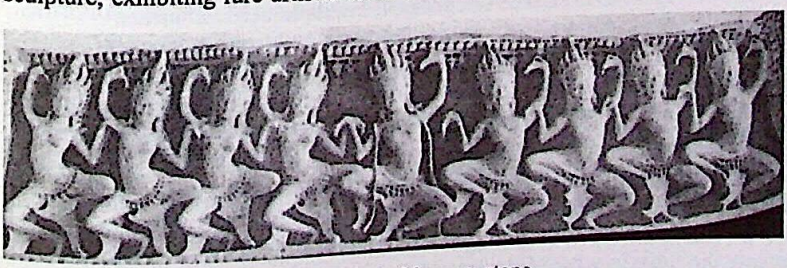

Fig. 13: Relief of dancers, stone.
Musee Guimet; Khmer, Bayon Sri, 12th century

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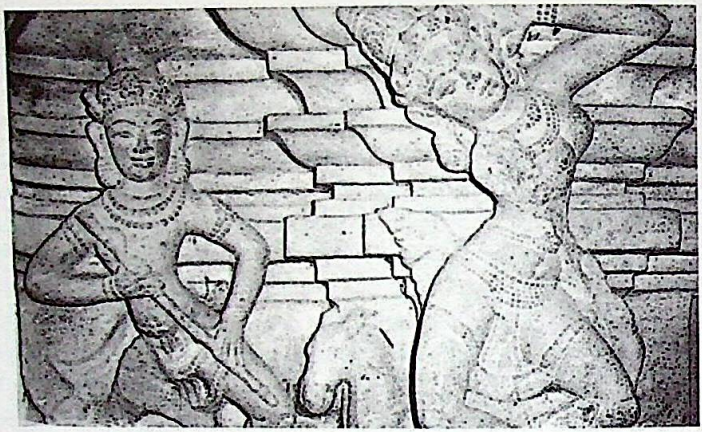

Fig. 14

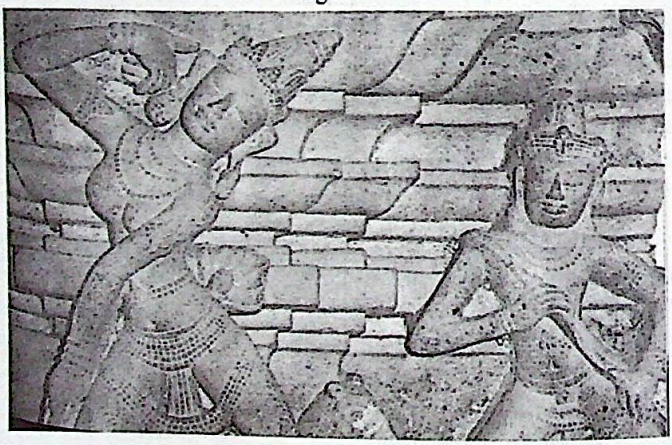

Fig. 15

Fig. 14 & 15 : Dancers on pedestal, sandstone, height 27 inches.
Cham Museum, Danang; Tra-Kieu,. 7th-8th century

gives way to a fluidity, unknown to other sculptures of either Mi-Son or Tra-Kieu. The lower limb movement is in a beautiful *ardhamandali*: the feet were possibly in *samapada* but it is difficult to hazard a guess (Figs. 14 and 15). Fully adorned with hip and waist girdles, the dancers have elongated slim torsos which bend to one side. The head, too, is tilted to one side. The upper limb movement is what accounts for the dynamic quality of the sculptures. While one arm is extended across the torso in a *kari hasta* or a *dola hasta* of the *Natyashastra* system, the other is held near the ear in a restrained *alapadma.* The position of the lower

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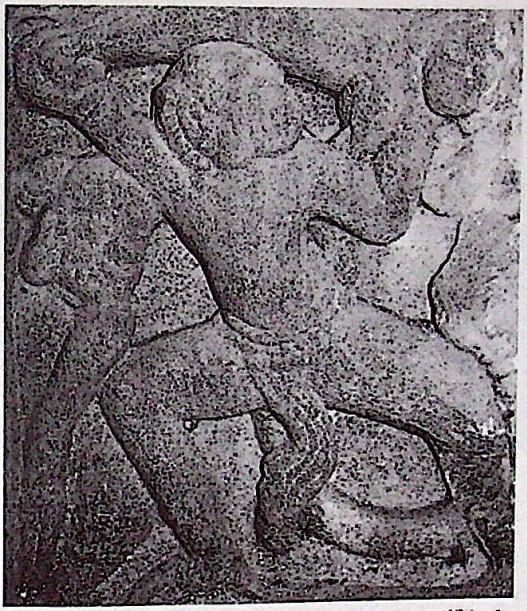

Fig. 16: Monkey, possibly Hanuman, sandstone, $14^{1/2}$ inches.
Cham Museum, Danang; Quang-Nam, 7th-10th century

limbs is identical in all the sculptures but the upper limb movement is reversed. The musicians are placed alternately and provide the compositional balance to the entire pedestal. These figures can be compared to many sculptural reliefs of Indian temples, particularly those of the *karana*-s commonly identified as the *karihasta* or the *lalita*.[36] Even so, the Champa figures are in a class by themselves and have no exact models in the Indian tradition. A distinguishing feature of Champa reliefs and sculptures is the near-complete and purposive absence of any hip deflection common in the Indian examples. Apart from this, there is the added feature of a continuity of line between the knee and the torso in the figures from Tra-Kieu. There is no break of line from the knee upwards and this accounts in a significant manner for the fluidity of the entire sculpture. Nor are the dancers from the Tra-Kieu pedestal imitations of the sculptural figures from Mi-Son or Thamp-Mam. They have an affinity of approach, but are clearly more refined and polished. They provide evidence of the high excellence of which Champa art was capable. This is a culmination of the fusion of indigenous and Indian traits.

An outstanding figure of a monkey, possibly of Hanuman, (Fig. 16) has close affinities with the Indo- Javanese reliefs of the character. Belonging possibly to

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Fig. 17: Krishna, sandstone, height 34$^{1/2}$ inches.
Cham Museum, Danang; Quang-Nam, 9th-10th century.

the tenth century, the monkey figure holds a branch of massive tree in his arms. The lower limbs are in outspread open position of the *mandala sthana*.[37] Both feet were possibly in *samapada*. The torso is extended to one side in an expanded movement: the sculptor succeeds in communicating a sense of power within a height of barely 13 inches, largely through employing a movement pattern and stance which suggests a massive gigantism. We will recall that Bharata prescribes this *sthana* for men, to be used while hurling missiles or using weapons when engaged in battle.

Of a much larger size (34$^{1/2}$ inches), and enclosed, is a figure of Krishna framed in an arch (Fig. 17). He supports an arch, possibly representing *Giri Govardhan,* and is also in a *mandala sthana*.[38] One hand rests on the thigh and the other lifts the stylised mountain and forest. Both in the treatment of the torso and the frontal placing of the face, Khmer influence is evident.

Of interest from the point of view of the sculpture are the images of the dancing deities, namely Saraswati, Durga and finally Shiva from Champa. A dancing Saraswati from Quang-Nai (eleventh-twelfth century)[39] is also in an *ardhamandali* with a slight *svastika* of the feet (Fig. 18). Surrounded by *hamsa* (geese), she stands frontally with an attentuated waist. Unlike in the case of the Tra-Kieu dancers, there is a distinct break of line at the waist and also a slight hip deflection. One hand is held near the waist and the other near the left breast. The torso is slightly pushed forward. She appears rather heavy and massive although of pleasant

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Fig. 18

Fig. 18a

Fig. 18: Saraswati, sandstone, height 41 inches.
Cham Museum, Danang; Quang-Ngai, 11th-12th century.
Fig. 1 8(a): Uma, sandstone, height 54 inches.
Cham Museum, Danang; Quang-Ngai, 11th-1 2th century.

countenance. Here, too, some Khmer features are clearly evident. This is also clear from the Uma figure from the same site.[40] (Fig.18a).

Amongst the several *nrittamurti*-s of Shiva, there is a large variety. Iconographically some are *Bhairava* and others *Saumya.* One from Mi-Son (Fig. 19) is in low relief with an imprecise *ardhamandali* but a clear pair of *kari hasta.* Other pairs of arms form radii around the figure. The head is tilted to one side. One worshipper bows low in obeisance and another *gana* figure stands bemusedly on the other side. Despite some lack of elegance it is a charming example of a dancing Shiva from Champa.

In contrast is a highly ornamental Shiva from Quang-Nam (Fig. 20), possibly belonging to the tenth century.[41] Sixteen-armed, the god dances in a more precise movement; the lower limbs are in *ardhamandali.* One foot is in *samapada,* the other in *kunchita.* The main pair of hands are in a variation of the *uromandala hasta:* one palm touches the waist and the other is near the shoulder, in a *hamsasya* with elbow out. The other seven pairs of arms form a semi-circle and the hands are in a variety of *arala hasta,* an uncommon feature in Shiva iconography. He is surrounded by ten musicians and attendants, six on one side and four on the other. Amongst the musicians, one is playing a large harp-like stringed instrument,

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Fig. 19

Fig. 20

Fig. 21

Fig. 19: Dancing Shiva, sandstone. 44 inches.
Cham Museum, Danang; Quang-Tri, 8th-10th century.
Fig. 20: Dancing Shiva, sandstone, height 36 inches.
Cham Museum, Danang; Quang-Nam, 9th-10th century.
Fig. 21: Dancing Shiva, sandstone, height 54 inches.
Cham Museum, Danang; Tra-Kieu, 7th-8th century.

the only evidence of the *Vipanchi vina* variety found in Cham art. The ornaments reveal some Javanese features, but again with no exact parallels.

Tra-Kieu[42] (Fig. 21) provides us with a sophisticated example of a dancing Shiva of 54 inches. He is a close second in excellence to the Tra-Kieu pedestal dancers (Figs. 14 and 15). Four-armed, he dances on a lotus pedestal. Again he is in *ardhamandali* with one foot in *samapada* and the other in *kunchita*. The *kunchita* foot, however, does not touch the ground: it is elevated, thus making the movement closer to the *urdhvajanu chari* movement of the *Natyashastra* system. The torso is frontal but there is a marked waist bend with a consequent extension of the chest. This feature of the dancing Shiva has some parallels in the Khmer examples referred to earlier (see Fig 13). One hand holds a lotus stalk and is placed near the thigh. The other is expended out, with the hand at head level away from the body. The other pair of arms are spread out. *Gana* figures accompany him. They also appear to be in *ardhamandali* with a *kunchita* foot position in each case and this is clear despite the damage. A sense of controlled movement is projected in this figure as it is in the pedestal dancers.

The above discussion is by no means a comprehensive account of the sculptures of the dance in Cham art. Even so, this representative sampling of the various categories of dance movement from different sites between the seventh to eleventh century will make it clear that the art of Champa is an essential constituent for reconstructing the pan-Asian movement patterns of dance. While the reliefs reveal an evolution and change in style, the dance movement continues to follow the

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fundamentals of what we have termed as the Indian *Natyashastra* model rather than the Chinese model.[43] Indeed the adherence to the *ardhamandali* as a basic stance for dance and thus dance sculpture continues well into the thirteenth century, although the sculptural quality of the late Thamp-Mam creations is markedly different from the early Mi-Son and Tra-Kieu styles. Again we have to reiterate the conclusions, which were made in the context of Pagan and Burmese examples. It would appear that from the seventh to the tenth century there was a pervasive pan-Asian dance style which depended on the *ardhamandali* as a fundamental. Whether this style evolved in India or elsewhere is not as important as the fact of its prevalence throughout the region, except in Chinese and Japanese art. The arms and the *hasta*-s were also articulated through maintaining a balance and symmetry largely by bending the elbow outwards. These characteristics were common, but the torso waist bends and spiral movements were different and varied. The Indian movement then becomes increasingly complex until it reaches the spiral screwing around the axis as in the flying *gandharva*-s of Khajuraho. In other parts of South-East Asia, the various possibilities of the *ardhamandali* are explored both through contact of both feet with the ground and elevation of one knee until it culminates in the chiseled *urdhvajanu* movements of Khmer art or the controlled but dynamic movement of the Tra-Kieu pedestal dancers (Fig. 14) or the dancing Shiva (Fig. 21) in Champa. An analogous deduction can be made in the context of sculptural and pictorial styles. However in the plastic medium many more changes and variations are introduced. Some are a result of interaction and others are determined by the assertion of national genius. Nevertheless the family resemblance continues. The affinity is once again the consequence of the pervasive adherence to the basic principles of the *sutra* and *bhanga* system of the *shilpashastra*-s. This is a single stream in all parts of South-East Asia, and may be termed as the Indian model only for the sake of convenience. Another movement begins to be in evidence in both Burma and Vietnam when the Chinese movement begins to be in evidence in both Burma and Vietnam when the Chinese models begin to make their presence felt. The continuities in both these streams are to be seen in the contemporary music and dance styles of these countries.

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22. *Ibid.* See Chapter X, Verse 2, for *abhugna* (slightly bent).

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24. *Ibid.* See Chapter VIII, Verses 170, 171, for *tryshra* neck movement.

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28. *Ibid.* See Chapter X, Verses 41, 42, for *udghattita.*

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37 *Natyashastra. Op. cit,.* See Chapter X, Verse 64-65, for *mandala sthana.* It is a position where the feet are apart and the toes face out. It is described as one of the five basic positions.

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Some Dance Sculptures from Assam

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

Although a certain amount of work has been accomplished on the architectural and sculptural traditions of Assam, there is to date no definitive study on the subject which has clearly established a chronology of the evolution of a distinct Assamese school of architecture and sculpture in its relationship to extant indigenous traditions and parallel developments in other parts of India.

Despite such a limitation and the incomplete and fragmentary nature of the evidence and the critical writing on the subject, the regional school is significant enough to demand the fuller attention of scholars. Its importance is further enhanced by the valuable material found in the excavations of the Ambari site carried out in 1969 and 1971 by the Department of Anthropology, University of Gauhati, in collaboration with the Central and State Departments of Archaeology. Many of these, including stone sculptures and terra-cotta figures, are housed in the State Museum at Gauhati, and in the Department of Anthropology, University of Gauhati. Alongside are the plaques and terra-cotta figures of the Tamreshvari Temple of a slightly later period. Finally there are the eighteenth century terra-cotta plaques of Jayasagar, Sibsagar District.

Our concern in this brief paper is to re-evaluate the sculptural figures relating to a few motifs of the earlier period (sixth to twelfth centuries) which have a relevance for a study of movement patterns, and which shed considerable light on the developments in Assam, in relation to other parts of India. In the study, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts.* [1] an attempt was made to examine the sculptural evidence relating to the dance under three or four distinct

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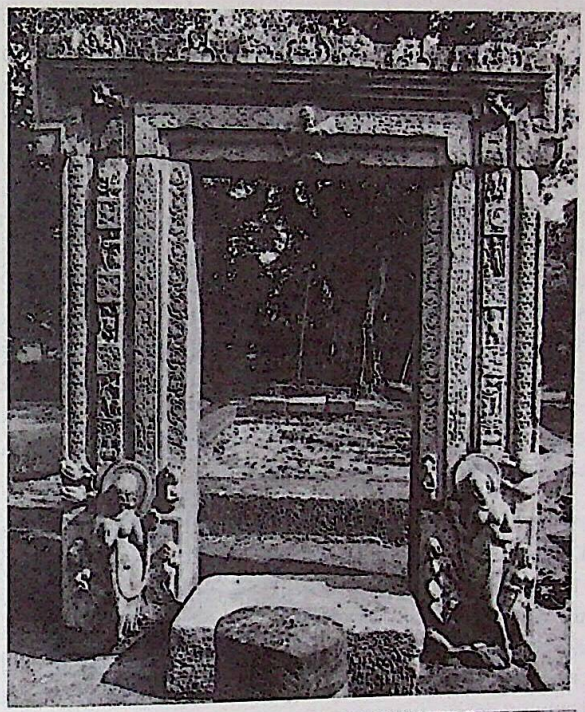

Fig. 1

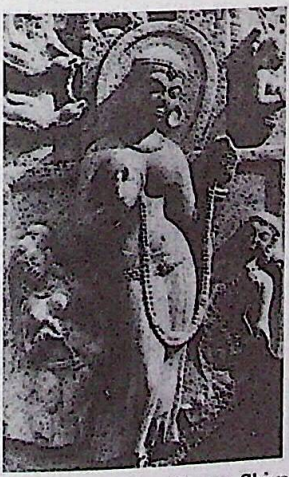

Fig. 1A

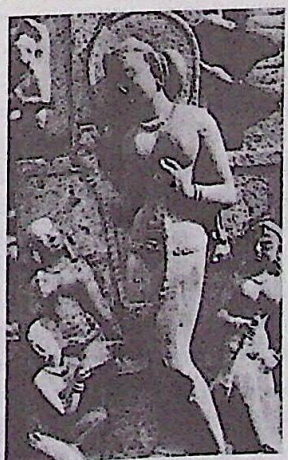

Fig. 1B

1. Dah-Parvatia from Tezpur, Shiva temple doorway, with Yamuna and Ganga, *circa* 6th century A.D.
1A. Detail of above: Ganga 1B. Detail of above: Yamuna

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categories. These were: (i) the *shalabhanjika* motif; (ii) the flying *vidyadhara* motif; (iii) the examples of dance movement in scenes relating to processions, performances, etc., and individual sculptures of dancers and (iv) the dance aspects of deities, normally termed as *nrttamurti*-s. Unfortunately, at that time, no examples from Assam were included, on account of the paucity of published material and because the valuable finds of Ambari and the adjoining areas had not then come to light. Nor was it possible to incorporate this evidence in the second edition of the book. A second look at the material from Assam is convincing proof of the thesis set out in that work that there appear to be certain Pan-Indian movements, which are common to all parts of India, at a given period and also that each school has a distinctive regional character, especially in the post-eleventh century period. We shall thus deal with a few select examples of these motifs from the sculptural remains of Assam, particularly Ambari, and would consider this as a necessary supplement to all that has been said on the subject in *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts.*

Foremost is the *shalabhanjika* motif, which is seen on door *jambha*-s as railing and bracket figures throughout the whole range of Indian sculpture. We have held the view that while this motif can be seen as the expression of a 'fertility cult' and a long-accepted myth of the *ashoka-dohada,* its formal elements are invariably related to the positions and movements termed in the *Natyashastra* and other texts as the *chari*-s. The *Natyashastra* speaks of one foot or leg movement culminating in certain positions, largely in 'place', called the *bhaumi chari*-s (earthly *chari*-s) and those that use both feet and legs, and indicate elevation from the ground, namely *akashikichari*-s (*aerial chari*-s). The Indian sculptor makes frequent and prolific use of the movement patterns from the earliest times, even if the sculptural figure serves the purely functional purpose of a bracket as in Sanchi. Examples can be found from the Ranigumpha caves of Orissa 'fertility cult' (*circa* first century B.C.) right till the seventeenth century in South India. Bharut, Mathura (in the early period) and Bhuvaneshwara, Konarak, and Khajuraho (of the medieval period) present a fascinating variety of the poses of sculptural figures which present the *shalabhanjika* motif. In Assam, although we do not find many examples of the motif in the early period, the medieval sculptures of the Ambari and other sites in Gauhati reveal a popular preoccupation with the motif. The Ambari and Gauhati examples have thus to be seen in relation to their precursors in Gauhati and in relation to contemporary developments in Khajuraho, Bhuvaneshwara and the Bengal school, roughly from the tenth to twelfth century A.D.

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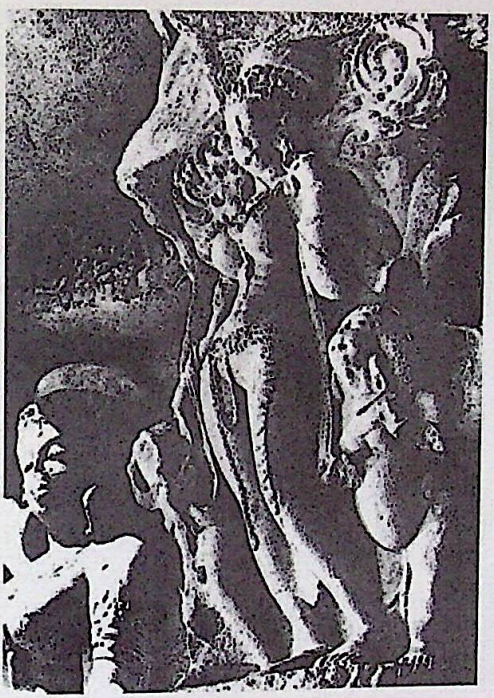

2. River Goddess, Sita ki Nahani Cave, Elura, *circa* 6th century A.D.

The precursors of the Gauhati and Ambari *shalabhanjika*-s and *dvarapalika*-s are the two beautifully-executed figures of Ganga and Jamuna in the ruins of the Shiva temple, Dah-Parvatia, Tezpur (Darrang District) also called Daha Parvatia and belonging to the sixth century (Illus. 1, 1A, 1B). These undoubtedly recall to mind the Deogarh gate and the *jambha* figures of the Gupta period, the Besnagar Ganga,[2] and the female figures of the Elura caves (Illus. 2).[3] The continuity of movement with a marked restraint is characteristic of all these figures. The Dah-Parvatia examples tell us of a similarity of approach, where each of the two figures has a *samapada* of one foot and a slight *kunchita* of the other foot. The knee of the leg, which has the *kunchita* foot, is slightly bent in all the examples. The *abhanga* is also clear and we find no sharp lines or angles. The upper torso is slightly bent without any accentuations and this is very close to the Besnagar Ganga. However, there is no tilt of the neck in either the Deogarh examples or the Besnagar Ganga, or in the Elura cave *jambha* figures. A close comparison of the examples of the three sites reveals very deep affinities, but also certain differences in the manner in which the same pose has been treated. What is true

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3. *Shalabhanjika* from Majuli, Darrang District Assam, *circa* 10th century A.D.

of the quality of flowing movement in the body is equally true of the drapery and the jewellery. The transparent skirt coming down to the ankles is evident in all these examples; so also is the waist girdle, and the economy of ornamentation, both of the upper and lower limbs. The coiffure, however, is distinctive in each case. Other distinguishing features are the spacing of the *gana*-s and minor figures who invariably accompany the motif.

But the ninth to eleventh century examples are a far cry from these early examples. In three examples from the Gauhati Museum, we find a marked change from a flowing curve to definite lines. The earlier flow is replaced by a terseness of treatment, which has some features in common with the Bhuvaneshwara, Khajuraho *shalabhanjika*-s and those of Rajasthan but there is also a distinctive regional character in all the examples. They cannot be mistaken for the figures of either Bhuvaneshwara or Khajuraho.

The *chauri-bearer* from the Majuli Tea Estate, Darrang District, (*circa* tenth century) stands frontally in a clear *samapada* of both feet, even if the feet have been broken now (Illus. 3). The deflection of the hip to one side and the torso to the opposite is clearly and precisely delineated. In none of the earlier examples of Assamese sculpture, do we see a *dola hasta* but here there is a perfect *dola hasta* of one arm and she holds the *chauri* in a half-mushti by the other. The bust is full and rounded and the neck is in *anchita*. While it would be impossible to identify the figure as a standard example of the *shalabhanjika*, its stylistic features quite obviously make it one amongst the many interpretations of the same motif. The facial features of the figure, however, are distinctive and so are the ear

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ornaments. The other *dvarapalika* (Illus. 4) shows a further development of movement, for here she stands in a clear *svastika chari* position, with one foot in *samapada* and the other in *kunchita.* While she holds the *khadga* in one hand, with the other she holds a *darpana.* This holding of the *darpana* is quite different from the treatment of this motif in either Bhuvaneshwara or Khajuraho. Each single movement of the upper and lower limbs is clearly seen in terms of parallel vertical lines instead of curves. The modelling is bold. The tiara on her head is a characteristic feature of many sculptures from Assam and we realise that it is this tiara which then crystallises into the crown and head-dress of the sculptures of Assam in the Ahom period. We find thus that although the thematic content and the principles of movement are similar, the treatment is distinctive. Finally there is yet a third example from Gauhati, called the *Alasya-Kanya,* which is a perfect depiction of the *shalabhanjika* motif. Here while there is a *svastika* of the feet, the *kunchita* foot is replaced by the *agratalasanchara* and the curve of the torso is markedly attenuated. There are many ornaments and we observe a greater sense of movement. While the three are in a series, there is a progressive development from a rather rigid *samapada* position to dynamic *svastika* movement. Taken together they are a continuation of the trends seen in the Ganga and Jamuna figures of Dah-Parvatia but also related to contemporary trends of the ninth and tenth century. All these are also related to the sculptures found in the Tezpur temple in Darrang District.[4]

4. *Dvarapalika* from Majuli, Darrang District, Assam, *circa* 10th century A.D.

The motif of the *vidyadhara* or the *gandharva* has also become known to Indian sculpture since the second or first century B.C. and one of the earliest examples comes from the Ranigumpha caves of Udaygiri and Khandgiri. Gradually it becomes a pervasive motif in not only Indian but all South-east Asian sculpture. While not many examples of the motif are found in the sculptural remains of Assam, there is an outstanding example

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of the motif from Gauhati (Illus. 5). Encircled in an oval shape, the *vidyadhara* is seen in a characteristic pose of the *vrshchika kuttila karana,* holding a garland. Its treatment is frontal, without that twist of the waist, so characteristic of the Khajuraho Dulahdeo Temple *vidyadhara*-s. There are, however, many features which link it to the *vrshchika karana* motif seen in the Rajiva Lochana Temple and also in Khajuraho.[5] Elsewhere we have drawn attention to the characteristic feature of the depiction of the flying motif, which to our mind draws its inspiration from the movements of this generic group described in the *Natyashastra* as the *vrshchika karana*-s.[6] The one leg infolded, with a marked bend of the knee, and the other free in space to extend backward or sideways is known to many schools of Indian sculpture. The example from Gauhati also belongs to this family where an identical approach is adopted. Again, except for the special headgear, which is evident in most Assamese sculpture, the figure is very much a part and parcel of the larger group of flying figures found in all parts of India.[7] All these (with the solitary exception of two examples from Sanchi) are gandharva-s or *vidyadhara*-s, without a pair of wings and seen in a movement cadence called the *vrshchika karana.* The example from Gauhati is in the *vrshchika kuttila* with one infolded leg and the other extended with an out-flexion of the calf. In treatment, it differs from the Aihole figures and the Rajiva Lochana figure,[8] on account of an almost frontal treatment of the torso. The Khajuraho *vidyadhara* [9] is theclosest mirror image, both for the position of the legs and the treatment of the torso. Purely stylistically, the Gauhati *vidyadhara* lies somewhere between the Aihole and the Khajuraho *vidyadhara*-s.

5. *Vidyadhara* from Ambari, Gauhati Museum, Assam, *circa* 10th century A.D.

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Judging from the prevalence of the *shalabhanjika* motif and its depiction and that of the flying *vidyadhara,* it would appear that there was an affinity between the sculptural reliefs in Assam in the ninth-tenth century and those in many other parts of India.

Although both these categories are important indicators for recognizing the adherence to certain movement patterns of the *Natyashastra* tradition, the more valuable reliefs are those which capture the dance scene per se. Here again we have significant evidence from Assam. In the ruins of the Tezpur Town, Darrang District, there are a few panels which show a pair of dancers carved within a rectangular frame.[10] In each there is a dancer accompanied by a musician, either a drummer or a flutist. The dancer in nearly five of these panels is in an identical pose. The lower limbs are invariably in an *ardhamandali,* with bent knees and all that we have termed as the *kshipta* position of the legs and knees. In each case, one foot is in *samapada* and the other in *kunchita.* In short, the position of the lower limbs is common to all the *karana*-s of the *ghurnita* or the *valita* variety. One arm is raised, with the hand at the level of the head, and the other is extended in a *lata hasta* in front. Since, except for a single example, one arm does not cross over to the other side but remains in the centre, it cannot be identified as the *kari hasta* movement. The differences arise out of a variety of ways in which the torso and neck movement is captured by the sculptor. The closest parallel of a similar movement comes from dance figures seen in Rajasthan[11] where we find a single dancer enclosed in rectangular areas. They are seen in a variety of poses. A few amongst these capture a movement reminiscent of that captured by the Assam reliefs.

Of great significance is a scene of music and dance from the tenth century from Gauhati where, inspite of its present mutilated condition, one can quite clearly observe an attempt at capturing a full music and dance sequence dynamically. There are three figures, one of a dancer in the middle, the second of a drummer and the third of a seated figure who may well have been a vocalist, or a director (akin to a *nattuvanar*) of the performance. Both the drummer and the dancer are depicted in an open *ardhamandali,* with a much wider space between the feet than the examples quoted above. The proportion of the upper and the lower limbs leaves an impression of an elongation, a greater sense of flow than those of the *dvarapalika*-s and the *shalabhanjika*-s or the pair each of musician and dancer in the Tezpur panels. Although it is not possible to be certain about the nature of the foot-contact, it would appear that while one foot is in *samapada,* the other was possibly in a *kunchita.* The drummer holds a drum of the *alingya*

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variety and has a slight *abhanga.* The dancer is in a *prshthasvastika,* and there is definite turning around the *trika.* Many examples of this type of movement can be seen in other parts of India. particularly the Sasabahu Temple, Gwalior, and in Kerala.[12] One hand is raised high above the head and the other is gracefully extended to its own side in a *lata hasta.* Had this scene been complete, it would have received the same attention as the *prshthasvastika* seen in a figure from Allahabad.

The entire composition makes it clear that in Assam, as in other places, there was a style of dance which depended for its kinetic vocabulary on the *ardhamandali,* the *svastika* and *prshthasvastika* and *uromandala hasta*-s and the *lata hasta*-s. Both the Tezpur and Gauhati sculptures offer evidence of the fact that at least until the tenth century we cannot identify any movement which we today associate with either Manipuri or for that matter *sattra* dancing although a *kshipta* position of the knees is seen in the latter. Nor do we find the typical *khol* or *pung.* The drums are all smaller.

Finally, to this period belong the two important finds from Ambari, not in stone, but instead in terra-cotta. There is a female torso which without doubt was the figure of a dancer, even if the lower limbs and the arms are today missing (Illus. 6). M. K. Dhavlikar mentions this figure in his report on the Ambari excavations.[13] He says, "When complete this would have been one of the finest figures of its class in the entire range of Indian art. The sensitive modelling bears eloquent testimony to the high attainment of the artist. The voluptuous breasts and the attenuated waist add to the sensuous curves of the body. The figure is probably that of a semi-divine nymph (*apsara*). Stylistically, it is related to the *surasundari*-s on the Sun Temple of Konarak (Orissa). Made of extremely fine kaolin, it was fashioned in two parts, the front and the back pressed out of two separate moulds and then joined together. The thin-ribbon of clay joining the two parts is visible at the sides. On the basis of stratigraphical and stylistic evidence, the figure can be dated to *circa* 8th to 10th century A.D."

6. Broken torso; terra-cotta, Ambari, Dept. of Anthropology Museum, University of Gauhati, Assam, *circa* 8th century A.D.

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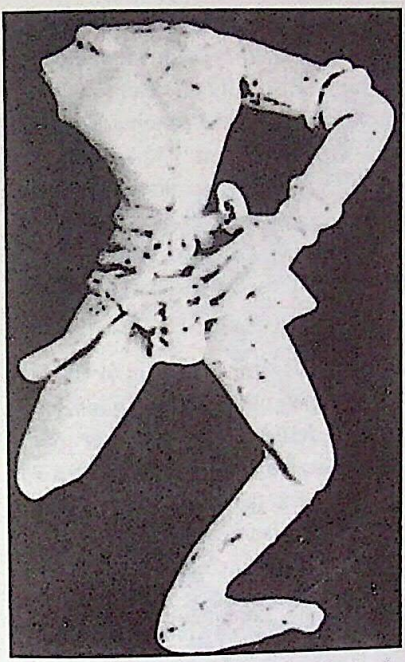

7. Terra-cotta figure of a dancer, Ambari, Dept. of Anthropology Museum, University of Gauhati, Assam, *circa* 8th century A.D.

This general description speaks of the aesthetic qualities of the figure and while we may not agree that she is related to the *surasundari*-s of the Sun Temple, Konarak, it is clear that she does manifest a highly evolved tradition of sculpture, fully acquainted with the norms of sculpture technique, and using these norms with consummate artistic skill. Indeed its significance is enhanced by the fact that perhaps it is the only terra-cotta figure in the round which captures movement so perfectly. Its proportions, 18.1 cm height and 10.3 cm width of the breasts and 9.4 cm width of a narrow waist are impressive. While examples of free standing sculpture in stone and in bronze are found in other parts in India, there are hardly any other examples of terra-cotta figures of these proportions in the round which depict the full human figure in a moment of dance. Although no definite surmises can be made, it would perhaps not be incorrect to speculate that her lower limb position was in an *ardhamandali* and that the arms were in a position akin to that which we have mentioned in the reliefs referred to above.

The other terra-cotta figure reinforces our impression for here is a perfect example of the *ardhamandali* in absolute symmetry (Illus. 7). The modelling is as perfect and the movement is without doubt of a dancer arrested in a dynamic moment of movement. Its chiselled quality, its perfect proportion and balance make it a figure which is in a class by itself and is an invaluable addition to our knowledge of the prevalence of a developed tradition of both sculpture and dance in Assam. Its *ardhamandali* is without any deflection of the hip in an *abhanga*, a feature characteristic of the Bhuvaneshwara and Konara sculptures. In this respect, if a comparison must be made, it can be only to the central dancer of the famous dance panel from Harshagiri, Rajasthan. As a terra-cotta figure depicting the dance it is unique and needs to be better and more widely known.

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For comparison we can refer here to an example of a tenth-eleventh century Shiva dancing figure from Numaligarh where a similar type of movement is captured. Although the two media are different, stylistically one can seek clear affinities (Illus. 8). Indeed the latter is also very close to the dancing Tripurari Shiva from the Deoparbat Numaligarh figure from Gotaghat.[15] Apart from the Tripurari Shiva mentioned above, who is seen in an *urdhvajanu* movement, there is the Chandrashekhara Shiva dancing on a bull found in the river-bed, Uzanbazar, Gauhati. His pose, too, is in *urdhvajanu* (Illus. 9).[16] A slightly later Nataraja from Ambari is also in *urdhvajanu* (Illus. 10). Other examples from Ambari of Vishnu, Surya, Ganga and Jamuna tell us the same story.

8. *Gayasura* from Numaligarh, Gauhati Museum, Assam, *circa* 10th century A.D.

This then brings us to the last category of the dancing *gana*-s and the deities. Here, too, not many examples are to be found, but we have enough examples to support the view that, as in the case of the first three groups, there was a consanguinity of approach. The principles of movement followed in the depiction of a Shiva *gana* (tenth-eleventh century A.D.) and that of the Nrtta Ganapati are similar to what we have noticed in all the other figures. In the Shiva *gana,* a definite *asana* has been captured, but the Nrtta Ganapati is in a powerful dancing movement; in a *kshipta* of the legs, one foot in *samapada* ,and the other in *kunchita*; the arms, one in *uromandala* and the other in a clear *kari hasta* (Illus. 11). There is also a marked deflection of the hip balanced with an extension of the torso in the opposite direction. The terra-cotta dancing figure is an example of perfect balance and symmetry in restraint; the dancing Ganesha of a powerful movement in exuberance and asymmetry. One diagonal relates the movement of the arm and the opposite leg and another is formed by the line of the *kari hasta* and the flowing trunk. The impression of a

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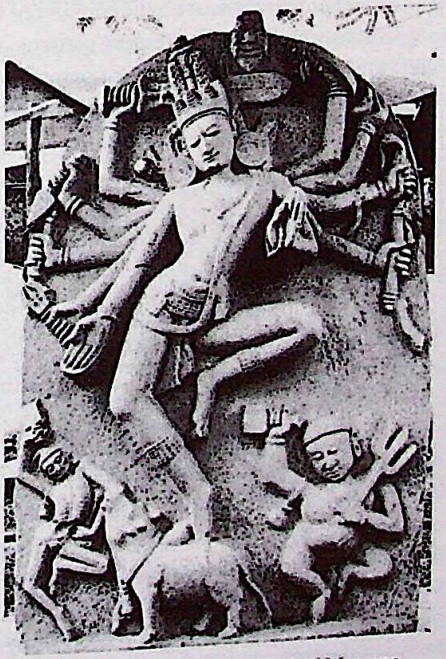
9. *Nataraja* from Uzanbazar, Gauhati, Gauhati Museum, *circa* 9th-10th centuries A.D.



10. *Nataraja* from Ambari, Gauhati Museum, Assam, *circa* 10th century A.D.

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dynamic tension and joyful abundance is created by the intersecting lines of these diagonals, all placed within the circumscribed space of the horizontal rectangular area. A very different treatment of the theme is seen in the Ganesha dancing on the *vahana* on the walls of the Kamakhya Temple.[17] Here he is set in a vertical frame, and one can discern the clear movement of the *samapada* feet and the *kunchita* foot with a *dola hasta*. Although the example is not quite as chiselled as the famous example from the Bharata Kala Bhavan, Varanasi,[18] it is a close parallel of the latter. However, the dancing Ganesha from Barpukhurir Holeswar, Tezpur, compares favourably with the Varanasi dancing Ganesha.[19]

We see thus that between the sixth and twelfth century Assam witnessed a sustained development of an architectural and sculptural tradition which had many interesting points of contact with parallel movements in other parts of India. Also, inspite of these affinities, one observes a distinctive Assamese character which begins to make its way from the sculptural reliefs from Daha Parvatia and culminates in the regional school of Kamakhya. This conclusion can be reached also by examining motifs other than those we have considered here, but since our main concern was with the evolution of movement patterns, the few examples included here illustrate the Indian phenomenon of an interaction between different schools at a given moment of time, as also a gradual evolution of a distinctive regional style.

While one could go on to narrate the history of Assamese sculpture in the post-Kamakhya period and the many significant finds, mostly in terra-cotta, found in different sites between the seventeenth and eighteenth century, these belong to another type of development which has many local variants unconnected with what we find in other parts of India. From amongst these, one is particularly interesting. This is a dance scene where we find three dancers, all in a *svastika* pose. The *ardhamandali* has given place to an erect posture with a definite elongation of the figures. The central figure possibly has a *karkata hasta* and the other two are seen in an *alapadma* of one hand. Finally, there is the dancing figure of an ascetic belonging to the eighteenth century. This figure is unique on account of the ritualistic type of dance it depicts. The horizontal lines of the torso, suggesting ribs, are in deep contrast to the vertical lines of the upper and lower limbs. The *trishula* and the other implements are quite obviously indicative of the ritualistic character of the dance; the knotted coiffure, the tilt of the head and the distinctive open position of the lower limbs in an *ardhamandali* (which may have been nearer to the *mandalasthana* rather than the *vaishnavasthana*) make the figure unique. There is hardly any other stone relief or terra-cotta figure which

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11. Dance of Ganesha and Kartikeya, Gauhati, Gauhati Museum, Assam, *circa* 9th century A.D.

portrays a similar type of ritual dance. More needs to be known about this figure from textual or creative literature before any final conclusions can be drawn from this sculptural relief alone.

While we have here restricted ourselves to the sculptural evidence and have not related it to the inscriptional records and the fund of historical evidence in chronicles and creative literature found in Assam relating to the dance, it is necessary to point out that such portrayal of dance movement could have been possible only if there was in fact a flourishing tradition of the dance at different levels of society and these examples could not be based either on the imagination of the artist or models found in other parts of India. Although little is known about the history of theatre and dance in Assam of the pre-Shankaradeva period, there is enough inscriptional record of a flourishing tradition of the *devadasi*-s in the different temples of Assam. Perhaps the earliest reference comes from the Tezpur Copper Plate Grant of Vanamala (ninth century A.D.) which speaks of a group of women who were dedicated to the temples. There is a clear reference here to the offer of the *devadasi*-s to the temple of Hatakeshvara or Hataka Sulin at Tezpur.[20] Scholars like Dr. P. C. Chowdhury and Dr. B. K. Kakati have drawn our attention to the use of the word *Dulaharigana* for women dedicated to the temple.

Later, several references are found, during the Ahom rule, to the nature of land grants and the manner of worship in the Shiva and Vishnu temples. A careful perusal of the epigraphical evidence from Assam on which much valuable work has been done by Mr. Gait, Dr. Neog and others[21] may yield corroborative evidence of these sculptural finds.

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This would then need to be seen in relation to texts like the *Hastamuktavali* and the commentaries of the *Gita-Govinda*[22] and the pictorial evidence in the *Chitra Bhagvata* and other texts.[23] Thus far, from a perusal of some of this material, one can gather information on the native of the shrines, the priesthood and the tradition of the *devadasi*. But except for the *Hastamuktavali*, no epigraphical record or literary evidence throws light on the technical aspects of the dance, such as the pose, *bhangi* and the various *nrtta* movements. However, this requires further probing and no conclusions can yet be drawn on the basis of the published material. Perhaps Assamese scholars will without doubt unearth literary evidence which will support the sculpture evidence and thus help in reconstructing the history of dance which ultimately culminated in a style of dance which we today recognize as the *Deodhani* tradition on the one hand, and the *Oja-palli* and *Sattra* tradition on the other. This article is an exploratory attempt on the basis of a few (but certainly not all) examples of the sculptural finds of the earlier period.

Notes:

1. Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts,* Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, 1968. Chapter IV, Sculpture and Dance, hereafter referred to as V, K, *CIDLA.*
2. See Agrawal, V. *Gupta Art.*

   Plate for Deogarh door-frame; for Besnagar Ganga.
3. V., K. *op. cit. CIDLA.* Fig. 15. Female figures from Rameshwara Caves.
4. Nath, R. M. *The Background of Assamese Culture,* published by A. K. Nath, Shillong. 1948, PI. X, 3, Dancing images, Bamuni Hill, Tezpur, hereafter referred to as Nath, R. M. *B. of A.C.*
5. V., K. op. *cit. CIDLA.* Figs. 49 and 50, Fig. 49 from Rajiva Lochana Temple and Fig 50 from Dulahdeo Temple from Khajuraho.
6. V., K. *Vrshchika Karana,* an article in the *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Arts, (JISOA)* Vol. V. (New Series), Part II, 1972-73.
7. V., K. *op. cit. CIDLA.* Figs. 39 to 55.
8. *Ibid,* Fig. 44 and 49.
9. *Ibid,* Fig. 50 from Khajuraho.
10. Nath, R. M. *B. of A.C.* PI. X, 4 & 5, R. M. Nath describes these as scenes of Bihu dancing, but there in nothing in common with these examples and what one observes of Bihu dance today.
11. V., K. *op. cit. CIDLA.* Fig. 90. A scene of dancers from Jodhpur. (See third figure from right).

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12. *ibid,* Fig. 97, dance figure from Sasabahu temple, Gwalior (11th century) and Fig. 98 from the Trivikramamangal temple, Kerala (12th century).

13. Dhavalikar, M. K. 'Archaeology of Gauhati', *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute.* Vol. XXX-XXXII, 1973, pp. 137-149, description on page 143. Also see. 'Ambari Excavations'. *Journal of*

Poona University. Vol. 35. 1972; *Indian Archaeology.* 1968-69. A review *Excavations at Ambari,* pages 3-4 and PI. IV (b).

14 V., K. *op. cit. CIDLA,* Fig. 91, from Sikar: Harshagiri, the Purana Mahadev temple. 10th century and also see Fig. 93. figures on the left in the Chalukyan panel of Shiva and Parvati on Nandi.

15. Nath, R. M. *B. of A.C.* Plate XII, Tripurari Shiva from the ruins of Deoparbat Numaligarh, Golaghat.

16 *Ibid.* PI XIV, ii. Chandrashekhara Shiva dancing on Vehicle (River bed Uzanbasar. Gauhati).

17. *Ibid.* PI. XIII, iii. Ganesha dancing (on the wall of the Kamakhya temple).

18. Bharat Kala Bhavan. See Ganesha.

19. Nath, R. M. *op. cit. B. of A. C.* PI. XVII, ii. Dancing Ganesha from Barpukhurir, Holeshvara, Tezpur.

20. Rajathananda Das Gupta, 'The Institution of the Devadasis in Assam', *Journal of Indian History,* Vol. XLII, Part II, August, 1965, Serial No. 128, pp. 555-578 and particularly pp. 570-571.

Also see Bhattacharya, V., *Kamarupa Sasanvali.* pp. 62-64 and Chowdhury P. C., *A. History of the Civilization of the People of Assam.*

21. Neog, Maheswar, *Prachyarsasanvali:* an anthology of royal charters inscribed on stone, copper, etc. of Kamarupa, from 1205 A.D. to 1847 A.D. English Introduction and Text.

Gait, Edward A. A. *History of Assam.* 2nd edition, Calcutta, 1926. Bhuiyan S. K. *Kamarupar Buranji,* Gauhati, 1930. etc.

22. Neog, Maheswar, 'Two Commentaries of the *Gita-Govinda,' The Journal of the Music Academy.* Vol. XXV, 1954-55.

23. *Bhagavata-Purana* Finds. Two illustrated manuscripts; one of Book VI painted by Vadha Ligira and the other of the Tenth Skanda found in Bali-Sattra.

See illustrations in Nath, R. M. *B of A. C.* Plates XXXV and Neog, Maheswar, *The Art of Painting in Assam,* Gauhati, 1959, Figs. 6 and 8 and 22 and 23. The last depicts a *maharasa.*

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Nataraja in Art, Thought and Literature

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

The theme of the Nataraja has gripped historians, literary critics, sculptors, painters, musicians and alike for over a hundred years now.

Historians of Indian art devoted considerable attention to the subject in the early years of the twentieth century. Some were attracted by its symbolic significance, others by the innumerable iconographical forms of the dancing Shiva and yet others by its historical development as a key theme in Indian art. Aurobindo, Coomaraswamy, Zimmer, Stella Kramrisch, Gopinath Rao, Vasudev Saran Agrawala, and Alice Boner are amongst the few eminent art historians who have given serious thought to Shiva as Nataraja and each has interpreted the significance of the concept through his or her particular viewpoint.

C . Sivaramamurti has been attracted to the theme since the days of his early writing; it was but natural that his long and distinguished contribution as an art historian should culminate in this encyclopaedic and monumental work.

C. Sivaramamurti, in characteristic fashion, draws freely upon sources ranging from the Vedas, Puranas, Kavyas and Agamas to sculpture, painting, music and dance; the mass of information is as impressive as it is staggering. He does not confine himself to Indian materials but extends his study to South East Asia. Those already acquainted with the ease with which Sivaramamurti deals with diverse source material are not surprised; few living Indian scholars share his ability to draw upon primary source material which lies scattered all over India and abroad.

This a review by Kapila Vatsyayan of the book NATARAJA IN ART, THOUGHT AND LITERATURE by C. Sivaramamurti, National Museum, N. Delhi, 1974, published in the *Quarterly Journal of the National Centre for the Performing Arts*, Vol 6, No. 1, 1976. It is being reproduced here with permission from NCPA, Mumbai and the author.

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The narrative of the present work moves speedily through fifteen chapters covering twenty centuries and the large spatial area of India and South-East Asia. The text is supported by 22 coloured plates, 374 monochromes and 20 line-drawings.

The first three chapters include considerations on the symbolism of Nataraja, the Lord of Dance, the purpose of *Natya,* its antiquity and the signifinance of Shiva's dance. In the next two, the reliefs of Brihadishvara and Chidambaram based on the Fourth Chapter of the *Natyashastra* are examined. These are followed by chapters on the origins of the concept of Nataraja. In these chapters Sivaramamurti traces its origins to Vedic and Hymnal literature and its historical development through epigraphical evidence. The *Shilpa* texts are also examined in another chapter. This is followed by a chronological presentation of evidence relating to the Nataraja image in sculpture and painting. The whole span of Indian art, ranging from the Pre-Gupta figures to late medieval painting, is covered. These are followed by a narration of the emergence and popularity of the theme in South-East Asia. The work concludes with a chapter on sites especially associated with Nataraja in India.

This massive array of informative material is matched by an equal empathy for the subject expressed in a style which is enthusiastic if not effusive. The author's commitment to his theme and his dedication to the concept is unmistakable, almost infectious. Again, those familiar with Sivaramamurti's work expect this characteristic treatment of themes, which lie so close to his heart.

The chapters relating to the appearance and development of the image in sculpture and painting are the richest and most systematic. Painstakingly he presents evidence of nearly nineteen centuries in a chronological order. The two hundred and forty-two supporting illustrations present a visual panorama of the preoccupation of the Indian artist with this theme from the Satavahana and Shunga periods to the nineteenth century paintings of Chamba and Kangra. Sivaramamurti identifies three Pre-Gupta examples from stone terracotta and coins as Shiva figures. Of these, the Gudimalam Shiva as Agnirudra (2nd century B. C.) is well known, but the other two— one a Shunga terracotta (2nd century B. C .) and the other a copper seal from 1st century B. C. Taxila are welcome additions to our knowledge. The stylistic features of the terracotta are quite different from scenes of music and dance found in the Bharhut railings. The vertical treatment of the two lower figures, and the musician identified as a Shiva figure have little in common with their stone counterparts. A detailed comparison of this representation with the Bharhut *apsara* scene would have been pertinent. The copper seal from

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Taxila identified as an *alidha* is somewhat less convincing although the trident-like weapon may well be a *trishula* of later iconographical images. Both these important pieces could have been analysed more thoroughly from the point of view of content and form. They throw up many questions which the author chooses to skip over. It is easier to follow the logic of the narrative from the Gupta period onwards; here the earliest example of the Gupta Shiva from Nachna (from Smt. Pupul Jayakar's collection) is illustrated for the first time. This is indeed a remarkable sculpture where we have a clear suggestion of the *Kari-hasta* for the first time. The author rightly draws attention to reference in contemporary Gupta literature to the dance of Shiva. It would have been, nevertheless, interesting to learn about the exact lines of development of the iconographical form with the characteristic *Kari-hasta* and *bhujangatrasita* movement. While the *Natyashastra* certainly mentions these in the context of the hundred and eight *karana*-s, it remains an enigma as to why and how the sculptor chose to select these particular movements for depicting Shiva's dance. A correlation of textual, literary and sculptural material might have unravelled these mysteries. As it is, Sivaramamurti confines himself to a listing of all sculpture which can be identified as the image of Shiva dancing and to an identification of the pose in terms of Bharata's *karana*-s and *sthana*-s.

Shiva Nataraja (Bhuvaneshwara)

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The subject of Vakataka sculpture from Ellora has been examined at great length by Gopinath Rao in his *Elements of Hindu Iconography*; its principles of composition have been commented upon by Alice Boner in her work, *Principles of Composition.* Sivaramamurti describes these sculptures in great detail, drawing our attention to the various constituents of the sculptural relief. His method is the same, as that followed by Gopinath Rao, and he does not identify those purely formal elements, which deal with volume and line and which give these sculptures their unique rhythm and dynamism.

The compositional armature of these reliefs is obvious to any discerning observer, and the value of Sivaramamurti's delineation would have been greatly enhanced had he analysed the abstract geometrical form which governs these concrete images. The proportions of Gauri Parvati and of the *gana*-s watching the dance are as important as the *lalita* or *chatura* pose of Shiva. Some comment on the sculptor's awareness of these aspects of artistic technique would have been welcome. Also, these and other examples of the medieval period, some published here for the first time, could have been correlated to the *Shilpa* texts which the author has so ably listed in Chapter Eleven. While an identification of each of these images from all parts of India to Bharata's *karana*-s convinces one of the pervasive use of the *Natya* terminology and of the evolution of a few stylised poses for Shiva's *tandava,* it does not throw light on the sculptor's autonomous vision, either conceptually or in its methods of concretization. It would have been interestig to learn about the adherence and departures by the sculptor from the *Shilpa* texts where the subject of *nrittamurti*-s is repeatedly discussed. The variations achieved within the framework of the same movement, along with a distinctive regional flavour of each school, is also a fascinating and puzzling subject. This rich mass of material could also have been analysed from this point of view, and specially on account of the author's unparalleled facility in dealing with material of the Southern, Northern, Western and Eastern schools.

What is true of the sculptural reliefs and images in stone and bronze, is truer of the diverse schools of painting. Here, too, Sivaramamurti presents fabulous material, much of it hitherto unpublished and, therefore, most welcome and valuable, but the narrative alas confines itself to a description of the pictorial representation and identification of the pose but does not extend to an examination of the development of regional style. There is a world of difference between the Shiva paintings of Elura and those of Brihadishvara, even if it is similar poses that are being delineated; a greater contrast is seen between the Shiva painting of the Tanjavur of the Nayak period (17th century) and those belonging to the Mysore schools of a slightly different period in the eighth century (figs. 141, 142 and 148,

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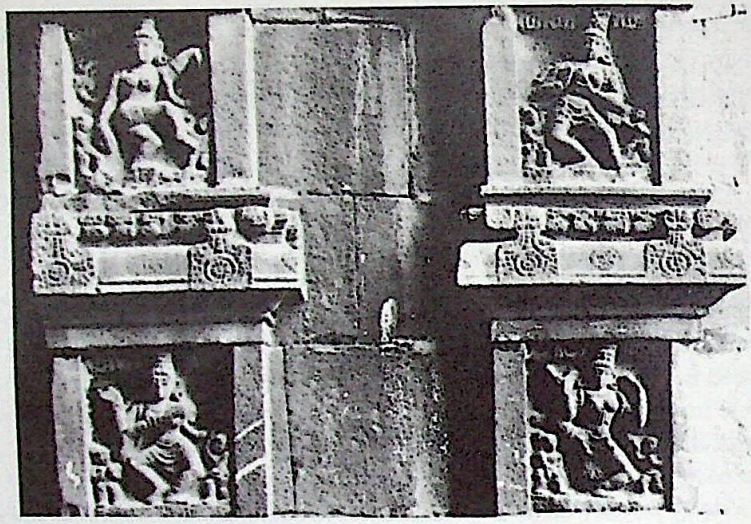

Karana-s in a gopuram (Chidambaram)

149 of Chapter 13). What is this difference which communicates a totally different sense of movement through line and colour? This and other questions remain unanswered inspite of the author's comprehensive and thorough descriptions. The visual impression of some of the later paintings is one of a static form as opposed to the dynamic rhythm of seventeenth century painting inspite of its ornate crowdedness and the rotundity of the human figures. We would have welcomed Sivaramamurti's comment on the causes which underlie these differences and changes. The theme of continuity and change in Indian art is manifested unequivocally in these artistic expressions; some light on this was called for.

Two earlier chapters are valuable for these analyses of the sculptural reliefs of Brihadishvara and Chidambaram: an examination of the reliefs of Vishnu dancing in the Sarangapani temple is also illuminating. The late Sri T. N. Ramachandran had analysed the Brihadishvara reliefs in terms of Bharata's *karana*-s; it is a pity that this work has remained unpublished. Sivaramamurti has done invaluable service by now publishing these and others from the Sarangapani temple. It was only correct to devote an independent chapter to this important topic, which is of great interest to both art historians and students of dance. Perhaps a comparative study of the reliefs of particular movements in the three sites would have enriched the present study. As in the case of the sculptural and pictorial representation of movement in the general dance scenes, so also here,

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the sculptors of the three sites of Brihadishvara, Chidambaram and Sarangapani interpret the same verse of Bharata, often very differently. Also, the *karana* of Bharata is not a static pose, it is instead a cadence of movement and the sculptor can arrest only a single moment in a whole sequence of movement. Sivaramamurti may have attempted to identify the particular moment rather than accept the earlier notion of scholars, that the *karana* is a static pose. The few instances where a comparative analysis is attempted are welcome. The Sarangapani temple quite obviously represents a different flowering and many movements of the sculptural reliefs of this temple are not seen either in the Brihadishvara or the Chidambaram temple; while Sivaramamurti comments on a few variations, he restricts himself to an identification of the pose in terms of Bharata's *karana*-s. The material in those chapters (Four and Five), nevertheless, provides sufficient data for a detailed analytical study of this important subject of the depiction of dance movement in sculpture, and it is hoped that other scholars will further develop the subject with this material and that provided by Dr. V. Raghavan in his introduction to *Nrittaratnavali.*

In the chapters dealing with literary, epigraphical and iconographical literature, Sivaramamurti proceeds swiftly from association to association, reference to reference not necessarily in any chronological order. These chapters are valuable for the fund of information they contain and also as expressions of the author's empathy for his subject. Sivaramamurti traces the origins of the concept of Shiva dancing to Rigvedic descriptions of Indra's dancing. He believes that this was the natural result of the "continuous process of fusion of ideas concerning both at different stages". The author establishes a connection between Indra, Rudra, Pashupati and Shiva through the identical epithets which are used for these in Rigvedic, Yajurvedic and classical Sanskrit literature. While this is plausible, and other scholars have so commented upon this, it would have been interesting to underline the specific contours of this development, transformation and overlayering. The concept of Shiva dancing emerges as a fully developed theme in classical Sanskrit literature, but the transitional stages between descriptions in Vedic literature, and nascent ideas in Upanishadic thought and the ritual of the Brahmanas remain unidentified. Bharata could not have given such predominant importance to the concept had it not been accepted in the literature and ritual of the period immediately preceding the writing of the *Natyashastra.*

This closed book of the transference of the abstract concept into the concretisation of the image through the medium of the plastic and the performing arts has still to be opened. It is obvious that a correspondence between the idea and the image is established at all levels of thought in the Indian world view, but

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the identification of the system through which this was accomplished and later sustained has not yet been touched upon by any art historian or philosopher. The dance of Shiva is one amongst many themes which could be taken as a touchstone to reconstruct the system which is implicit, but for which no texts have hitherto been discovered. Scholars, who can move freely between abstract concept in speculative thought and concrete manifestation in different media, alone can attempt this. Perhaps Sivaramamurti himself will follow up this study by another in which this important aspect of Indian art will be given serious attention. In short, what were the elements in early speculative thought and Brahmanical ritual which gave rise to a system of establishing correspondences and overlayering?

The chapters dealing with *Natya,* its origin and antiquity are equally informative. Sivaramamurti again moves freely between the text of the *Natyashastra* and much later texts like the *Nrittaratnavali* (of Jaya Senapati) to analyse the different constituents of the art. Although this is justified, we would have expected a closer examination of the vital changes which were taking place in different regions during a period of one thousand years or more within the key principles of *nritta, nritya* and *natya.* The inclusion of a whole class of movement called *deshi* also throws significant light on the sculptural depiction of the same movement in medieval times. The *nritta murti*-s of Shiva could not have remained unaffected by the concept of the *deshi.*

Coomaraswamy devoted considerable attention to the symbolism of Shiva's dance by drawing upon Tamil sources. Sivaramamurti adds to these sources and quotes many more, including the important texts like *Tilakamanjari* and *Saduktikarnamrita.* All these sources tell us of the great significance attached to the dance of Shiva and is valuable supporting evidence. Nevertheless, we would have welcomed a more rounded and fuller interpretation of the dance from Sivaramamurti, as he is one who has reflected upon this theme for many years.

It will perhaps be obvious from the above, that Sivaramamurti's task was none too easy and the putting together of material itself is a contribution for which we are beholden to him. The fact that further studies are still called for, only underpins the gigantic nature of the theme, its massive content, pervasive sway and its endless complexities of form and technique. Some of these Sivaramamurti has touched upon and has given us food for thought; others we hope he and those who follow him will undertake. His work will remain a landmark in the history of the treatment of the Nataraja theme for decades to come, but it must not be considered as the last word beyond which nothing can be said. He has opened up vistas for further exploration.

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The 108 Karanas

A Technical Re-Interpretation *of Chapter IV (Tdndava Laksanam) of Bharata's Natyasastra*

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

The *Karana* as a unit of movement is perhaps the most important subject discussed in the *Natysastra* in the *nrtta* technique of the dance. Indeed many contemporary scholars and lay readers of the *Natyasastra* have restricted their discussion of the *nrtta* technique to a discussion of the 108 *Karanas*. Since these *Karanas* have also been represented sculpturally in Chidambaram and the Brhadesvara temple in Tanjore, and since inscriptions of Bharata's verses are found in the Chidarnbaram temple, it has often been taken for granted that the description of *Karanas* in the *Natyasastra* is a description of static poses; it has rarely been stated that what Bharata describes as a *Karana* is a unit of movement built up of several smaller movements and that it is really a cadence of movement culminating in a pose. It has not been clearly understood that when a unit of movement is broken up into its several constituent movements, several poses can result at different points in time. This being so, any sculptural representation of a description of movement in language can be a sculptural representation of an arrested moment in an entire sequence of movement.

The effort of most scholars has been to identify the sculptured *Karanas* of the Chidambaram temple with the verses of the IVth chapter of the *Natyasastra*, and to point out the discrepancies between the inscriptions and the sculptural representation. The history of analysis of the sculpted *Karanas* has been a history of the attempt at the correct numbering of the *Karanas* in the Chidambaram temple. More recently this has also been done with the sculptural representation in the Brhadesvara temple. No attempt has been made by these scholars to determine whether the sculptured *Karana* represents the first or

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intermediary or final positions of the unit of movement described by Bharata as a *Karana.*

Again, whenever *Karanas* have been analyzed from the point of view of the *nrtta* technique scholars have restricted their discussion to the 1Vth chapter, and whenever translations have been made, or commentaries written, the terms indicating movements of the hands, feet, head, torso, or indicating the use of a particular *cari* or *sthana,* these have been translated generally or the terms have been reproduced without stating that the technical terms are discussed by Bharata in chapters subsequent to chapter IV of the *Natyasastra.* The impression gained from such discussions and translations is that the *Karana,* although a very important aspect of the *nrtta* technique, is not too comprehendable today.

Our aim here is therefore to interpret these units of movement as movement and not as static poses on the one hand, and to reclassify the *Karanas* in the light of the most important movement of the particular cadence on the other. Each *Karana* can be broken up into its constituents of movements of the major limbs–*angas* and the minor limbs–*upangas.* The movements of the *angas* and the *upangas* have been discussed in chapters VII, IX, X and XII of the *Natyasastra* as part of the general technique of *angika abhinaya* applicable equally to dance and drama. These *Karanas* can be thus understood fully only by a reference to these subsequent chapters where movements of individual limbs of the body have been discussed and where units of static positions like the *sthanas* and *asanas,* and preliminary units of movements like the *caris* have been discussed..

No accurate analysis of the *Karanas* is possible without a reclassification of the *Karanas* in terms of the most important movement of the particular *Karana.* Some of these *Karanas* take their name from the *nrtta hasta,* some from the position of the hip and waist (*kati*) some from the feet (*pada*) positions. Many take their name from the nature of the leg extension, like the *vrscika Karanas,* and others from the *cari,* the *sthana* or *asana* they employ. Some indicate the nature of movement like the *recita* or *bhramari.* The *Karanas* can be reclassified in terms of the most distinctive feature into 9 categories. Once this is done and it is known which movement is the principal movement in a given sequence, then the problem or identification of the sculptured *Karana* also becomes a problem of indicating whether or not the sculptural representation captures this principal movement. The two chief

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attempts which have been made to identify the sculptured *Karanas* of the Chidambaram temple with the correct verse of the *Natyasastra* chapter IV have been by B. V. M Naidu in the *Tandava Laksanam* and by the editors of the two editions of *Natyasastra* Volume I in the Gaekwad oriental series. Both these authorities have used the Archeological Departments' wood-blocks for illustration, and both have tried to relate an appropriate verse with the sculptural representation. Often there is unanimity, but sometimes there is complete divergence. These authorities not unlike others have also assumed that the *Karanas* are static poses, and all the efforts at identification are attempts at the identification of the pose, the stance, and there is little or no indication of which particular moment in a sequence is being represented.

We have reclassified the Karanas into different categories and have attempted to indicate the exact chapter and verse of the several movements of the individual limbs mentioned by Bharata. Further, an attempt has also been made to compare the identifications of the two authorities quoted above of the sculptural representation in the Chidambararn temple. An attempt has also been made to indicate whether or not the sculptural representation illustrates the description of the *Natyasastra* accurately.

On the basis of what has been stated above, the *Karanas* can be reclassified under the following categories :

(a) *Sama*: those which indicate stable positions i.e., *samanakha* 5, *lina* 6, *sambhranta* 101.

(b) *Hasta Karana*: those which derive their name from or have the *nrtta hastas* as their most significant movement: i.e., *talapuspaputa 1*, *vartita* 2, *nikuttaka* 9, *ardhnikuttaka* 10, *ghurnita* 32, *lalita* 33, *catura* 39, *uromandalika* 54. *gajakriditaka* 68, *talasamsphotita* 69, *sannata* 75, *karihasta* 87.

(c) *Svastika Karana*: those that take their name from the *svastika,* crossed, position of either the hands, feet, or the thighs: i.e., *svastika recita* 7, *mandala svastika* 8, *vakshasvastika* 13, *svastika* 15, *prsthasvastika 16*, *diksvastika* 17, *ardhasvastika* 22, *parsvanikuttaka* 49, *nagapasarpita* 106.

(d) *Recita Karana*: those which take their name from the *recita* of either the hands or feet or waist–*kati* or neck, etc. i.e., *ardharecita 12*, *unmatta* 14, *akshipta recita* 20, *recitanikuttita* 29, *vaisakha recita* 37.

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(e) *Vrscika Karanas*: those which make an arch of the leg like a scorpion's or utilise a back extension or backflexed position of the leg: i.e., *vrikuncita* 26, *vrscika kuttita* 42, *lata vrscika* 44, *vrscika recita* 46, *vrscika* 47, *lalatatilaka* 50, *mayuralalita* 80, *simhakarshita* 90.

(f) Sthana Karanas: those which derive their names from the static positions of the *sthanas*: *i.e., vyamsita* 48, *nivesa* 96, *lolita* 105.

(g) Cari Karanas: those which are derived from the *caris*. Sometimes the name suggests it and sometimes the verse defines it; i.e., *apaviddha* 4, *alata* 18, *bhujangatrasita* 24, *urdhvajanu* 25, *mattalli* 27, *ardhamattalli* 28, *dandapaksa* 34, *bhujangatrasita recita* 35, *nupura* 36, *bhramara* 38, *bhujangancita* 40, *dandarecita* 41, *krantaka 51, cakramandala* 53, *akshipta* 55, *dolapada* 60, *vinivrtta* 62, *parsvakranta* 63, *vidyudbhranta* 65. *atikranta* 66, *parsvajanu* 73, *suci* 76, *ardhasuci 17, sucividdha* 78, *apakranta* 79, *dandapada* 82, *harinapluta* 83, *prenkholita* 84, *nitamba* 85, *skhalita* 86, *simhavikridita* 89 *udvrtta* 91 *upasrata* 92, *t talasamghattita* 93, *janita* 94, *avahittha* 95, *elakakridita 91, urudvrtta* 98, *madaskhalitaka* 99, *visnukranta* 100, *vrssbhakridita* 104, *sakatasya* 107, *gangavatarana* 108.

(h) *Kati Karanas*: those which derive their names from the move ments of the *kati* (waitst or hips): ie., *katichinna* 11, *katisama* 19, *kati bhranta* 43, *chinna* 45.

(i) *Pdda Karanas:* those which take their name from the position or movements of the feet: ie., *ancita* 23, *padapaviddha* 30, *talavilasita* 56, *argala* 57, *vikshipta* 58, *avarta* 59, *garudapluta* 70, *gandasuci* 71, *grdhravalinaka* 74, *sarpita* 81, *prasarpita* 88, *viskambha* 102, *udghattita* 103.

(j) *uru parsva* and *janu Karanas*: those which derive their names or employ movements of those parts of the body as their most distinctive feature: i.e., *kunceta* 52, *nivrtta* 61, *vinivrtta* 62, *nisumbhita* 64, *vivartita* 67, *parivrtta* 72.

Since it is not possible here to analyze in detail all the *Karanas* and their sculptural representation in the Chidambaram temple, we can only deal with a few significant examples from the categories mentioned above, The most distinguishing feature of the *sama Karanas* is the erect unbent position of the knees. In almost all the other *Karanas*, the outward spread (*ksipta*) position of the knees is taken for granted. In the *sama Karanas* however the erect knees and the *sama pada* (flat feet) are emphasized. There is some difference

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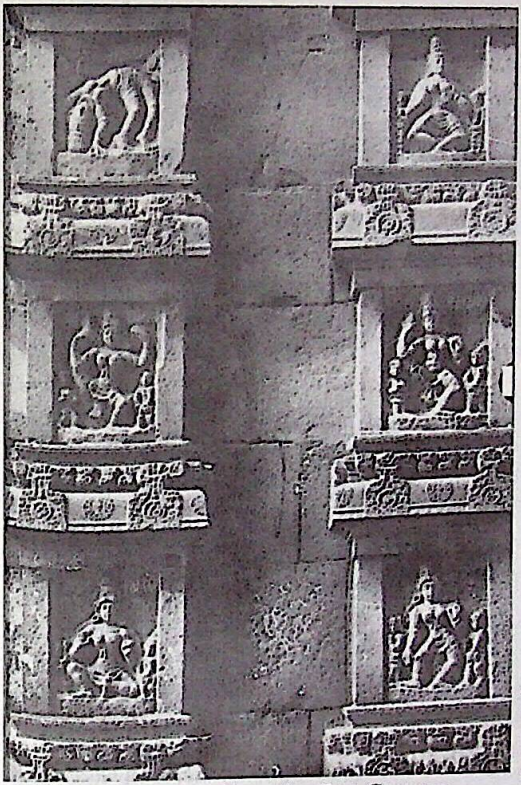

Figure 1: Karanas from the East Gopuram, Nataraja temple, Chidambaram; Top 66, 77; Middle 83, 80; Bottom 78, 63.

of opinion in the identification of *sambhranta Karana* 101, by authorities and the figure identified by Mr. Naidu in the *Tandava Laksanam* seems nearer the description of the *Natyasastra.*

Amongst the *hasta Karanas* there are many interesting examples of both agreement and complete divergence between the description of the *Natyasastra* and the sculptural representation. In the very first *Karana talapushpaputa,* the *Natyasastra* mentions the *pushpaputa hasta* and the *agratala sancara* feet. In the sculptural representation however, while the *puspaputa hastas* are accurately depicted, there is no indication of the *agratala sancara* foot (or feet), where the toe must be placed on the ground. Since there is no other figure which can be identified as this *Karana,* one can only conclude that the sculpture represents the initial position, and not the final one.

In the *Karana uromandalika,* the *uromandala* circular movement of the arms and hands is the most important feature: the text mentions a *svastika* position to begin with, and Abhinavagupta in the commentary mentions the *sthitavartia* and *baddha cari* as initial positions of the feet. The writers of the *Tandava Laksanam* and Ramaswami Sastri, editor of the second edition of the *Natyasastra* (in the Gaekwad Oriental series), however do not identify the same figure in the Chidambaram temple as this *Karana.*

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However if the *uromandala* movement of the hands is to be taken as the most distinguishing feature, then the figure identified by Mr. Naidu seems to be nearer the description of the text. It must be added however that this is a movement of the entire arms, and thus only the final position can be said to have been depicted. The *sannata Karana* 75; the two most important features of this *Karana* are the *sannata dola hasta,* and the jumping in the *harinapluta cari.* The *Tandava Laksanam* writers take their clue from these movements, and thus identify a figure, which represents a jump, (although a somewhat more violent one than the text would warrant) and has the *dola hasta.* Mr. Sastri seems to take his clue from the initial *svastika* position mentioned by the *Natyasastra,* and identified a figure which has the crossed *svastika* feet, but no *dola hasta*-s. One can conclude from either of these identifications that the writers have tried to identify either the final or the initial position of the movement, as the *karana sannata.* Judging however from the fact that no other figure represented in Chidambaram can be identified as this *Karana,* the figure identified by Mr. Naidu seems to be closer to the description of the final position of the *Karana* in the *Natyasastra.*

A *Karana* like the *karihasta* 87, on the other hand was easier to depict, since it indicates a final stance more than movement, and thus both the authorities have identified the same figure as the *karihasta Karana.* The sculptural representation is fairly correct, because the sculptor has illustrated both the *karihasta* and the *ancita* foot mentioned in the text.

Amongst the *svastika Karanas,* except for one or two, the important movements relate to the crossed position of the feet and the hands. They are distinguished from each other by the manner of the movement, and the exact area where the *svastika* takes place. Thus the *mandala svastika* indicates a circular movement preceding the *svastika* of the arms, and the *vakshasvastika* indicates a crossing at the chest level: the *prsthasvastika* indicates the posterior view and the *diksvastika* the profile. A sculptural representation of all these distinctions must have been somewhat difficult for the sculptor, and this results in a similarity of figures which represent the *vaksasvastika, svastika* and *ardhasvastika* on the one hand, and movements like the *prsthasvastika* and *diksvastika* on the other. In some cases, such as the *ardhasvastika,* the sculptor has not depicted important hand positions like the *karihasta,* and this has led to an inaccurate sculptural representation. The authorities have identified these figures also on the basis of the crossed position and have not pointed out the differences between the sculptural illustration and the textural description.

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Figure 2: Karana 24 "Bhujangatrasita" ; 3. Karana 23 "Ancita"; 4. Karana 47 "Vrscika"; 5. Karana 39 "Catura'

The same limitation is observed in the sculptural depiction of the *recita Karanas,* which are complete movements. Many liberties have been taken in the depiction of these *Karanas,* and but for the uniform *ksipta* (outspread position) of the knees, with the one *dola hast a* (or both arms in *dola)* they could be identified as some other *Karanas* of the *Natyasastra.* Wherever the text has described the *udghattita* movement (the toe-heel) of the feet, the sculptor has depicted the *kuncita* or *agratalasancara* foot. These figures can be identified only as the initial positions of the *recita Karanas.*

The correct depiction of the *vrscika Karanas* was easier since most of them indicate a very definite arched position of the leg in its front, back, or side extension, Indeed, the *Karanas* of this group lend themselves beautifully to sculptural representations. The *vrscika kuttila* and the *lata vrscika* indicate a back-flexed position; so do the *vrscika recita,* and the *vrscika.* The position

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Figure 3: 6. Karana 50 "Lalatatilaka" ; 7. Karana 40 "Bhujangancita"; 8. Karana 48 "Sthanajvyamsita".

of the bands and arms differ in each of these, and the differences in movement arise more out of the difference of the other limbs than the leg extensions. The *lalatatilaka* and the *mayuralalita* belong to a different type of leg extension. In fact the *lalatatilaka* indicates a complete leg extension where the leg is uplifted without the knee bent, so that the toe touches the forehead. The two authorities agree on the identification of most of these figures, and except for the *simhakarshita;* there is little room for doubt that the sculptural representations are accurate illustrations of final positions indicated in the text.

Surprisingly, none of the *Karanas* of the *sthana* group have been accurately depicted by the sculptors in the Chidambaram temple. A *Karana* like the *vyamsita* where the *alidha sthana* has been clearly mentioned in the text is rather clumsily sculptured. The feet are not five *talas* apart, and the leg is not extended fully sideways. The *alidha* had been represented sculpturally as early as the Rani

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Gumpha caves, and it is indeed surprising that the sculptors of the East Gopuram should have faltered in the depiction of such a well known pose. The same is true of the other *sthana Karanas* like the *nivesa* where the *mandala sthana* is described in the text as also the *lolitam Karana* where the *hsthana* is mentioned.

An analysis of the *Karanas* derived from the *caris* and a comparison of their identifications by scholars deserves an independent study. Most of these *Karanas* are descriptions of complete units of movements and the *Natyasastra* has described them in fuller detail than the other *Karanas*. Many of the *Karanas* take their names from the *caris* with identical names, and the particular *cari* is the most distinctive feature of the cadence. Often there are more than one or two *caris* used in a single *Karana* and for an accurate illustration it would have been necessary to depict each *Karana* through a series of sculptural representations, rather than through just one figure. Bharata has taken pains to indicate in the case of these *Karanas* almost without exception the initial, the intermediary and final position of the movement. In the *alata Karana* for example, the initial position is of the *alata cari,* and the final position is of the *urdhavajanu cari.* The intermediary movement is a pirouette. In the initial position the hands are on the level of the shoulders: in the final position they extend down. The sculptural representation does not depict the initial position, but the final one, with the *urdhvajanu cari,* and the hands extended down. Both Naidu and Sastri identify the same figure as the *alata Karana* but do not point out that the sculpture represents the final and not the initial position. The finest sculptural representation of the *urdhvajanu cari* is however seen in the *Karana* of that name, and this seems to have been a great favourite with sculptors in India, judging from its frequent depiction in South Indian temples, Khajuraho, and Bhuvanesvara. The *dandapaksa* with both arms extended diagonally (one up and the other down) like a staff, the *danda recita* and the *dandapada* all utilise the *urdhvajanu cari.* The sculptures invariably depict this final *urdhvajanu* position of the legs, and the differences occur only in the movements of torso, and the hands.

The *bhujangatrasita,* the *bhujangatrasita recita,* and *bhujangancita* form another sub-group where instead of the *kapita* position of the knees, the crossed thigh position of the *bhujangatrasita cari* is emphasized. What is commonly known as the *nataraja* pose belongs to this variety of the *Karanas*. The most controversial sculptural representation of the *Karanas* also belongs to the *cari* group of *Karanas;* the contemporary classical Indian dance styles give little indication of acrobatic cadences of movements, and the *Natyasastra*

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is not too clear in its descriptions of some of these; judging from the sculptures however, it is not difficult to conclude that some of these *Karanas* must have formed a part of the *nrtta* technique of the classical dance. Indeed, a few rare survivals can be seen in dance styles like the Oddisi. Of these *cakramandala, saktasya* and the *gangavatarana* are the more important. The *Natyasastra* only lays down that the *cakramandala* is derived from the *addita cari,* and that the hands are in *uromandala.* However the direction of the *uromandala hasta* and the name of the *Karana* gives us a clue to the nature of the *Karana,* and it is possible physically to attain this position from the *addita cari.* The *saktasya* is also not described as an acrobatic *Karana* by Bharata. Although the extended *talasancara* feet are spoken about, it is not mentioned that they touch the head after a back turn. This however is implied in the commentary of Abhinavagupta when he says that the *Karana is* to be used for *balakrida* etc. The sculpture again represents the final rather than the initial position described by Bharata. The sculptors must have followed an oral tradition in depicting this *Karana,* for only prevalence could have justified this particular sculptural depiction.

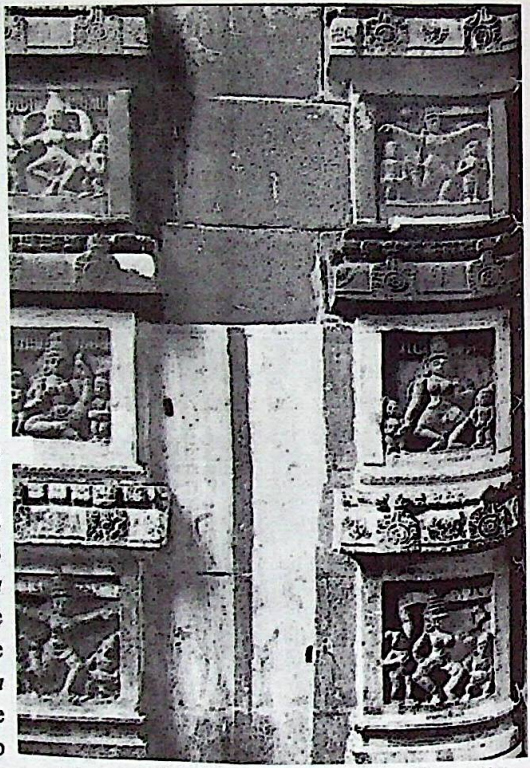

Figure 3 Picture caption: 9.Karanas from the East Gopuram ; Top 68, 75 ; Middle 96, 65, Bottom 70

The same is true of the last *Karana,* namely the *gangavatarana.* Here however, the description of the *Natyasastra* suggests such a pose when it speaks of both feet being lifted up and *tripataka* hands as facing the ground. Physically this could be performed only if the hands were in contact with the ground, and this is accurately represented in the sculpture.

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PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Delhi Diary

LEELA VENKATARAMAN

Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi began 2015 with the *Uttar Purva Sanskriti Sangam*, the packed weeklong festival presenting an unending array of less known traditional forms from the North East, Andhra areas and Kerala, carving space for classical dance practitioners from these regions too. Apart from Manipuri and Assam's Sattriya, the North East in particular has committed dancers of other Indian classical forms and showcasing their talent, emphasized how our classical traditions have attracted dance aspirants from all regions of the country.

Hemanth Kumar Kalita from Assam trained under gurus like Pandit Birju Maharaj, following an invocation *Bansibata Jamunatatha Nirakata Banvari* projected nritta in teental — the *Sangeet Ka Tukda* sequence and *Dhamar ka Andaaz* in teental, showing immaculate rhythm , coupled with exquisite grace in sequences like *Trishul chalana, Talwar ka Andaz* and *Parmelu. Ehi murari Kunja Bihari* portrayed the dancer as a convincingly graceful nayika, though the over indulgently heavy jewellery adorning his neck, could have been avoided. The interpretative item capturing *Ghanashyam* joyously dancing among the Kadamb trees, was sensitively performed.

Young dancers Asharani Devi and A. Gangadevi in their Manipuri recital presented *Dashavatar* and *Tanum*. The vatsalya rasa and sringar performed to music in Todi sung by Sanahanbi Devi, were the essence of grace. In the *Dasavatar* verses from the *Gitagovinda,* the music rose to an emotional climax while the manner of reciting the *bols,* with only a few syllables subtly accented in the dance, showed minimalism in an already subdued dance form. Yet another Manipuri dancer Rakesh Singh was a light feather- footed delight in his rendition

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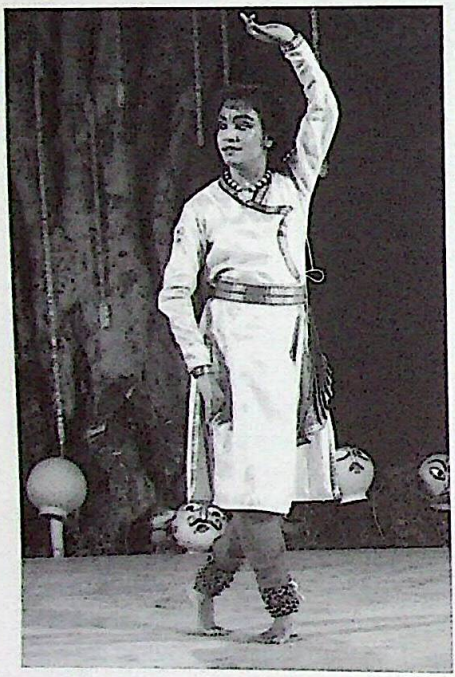
of *Dashavatar* and *Krishna Nartan, Dooti Samvad* and *Mridu Uddhata*, concluding with the Geeta Govinda Ashtapadi *Haririha mugdhavadhoonikare* (the last composed by late Amubi Singh in *Amritakalyani* raga and tala *Tanchep*) with the accompanying vocalist Priyarani Devi equally moving.



Partha Mandal

Kathak dancer Partha Mandal, a disciple of Jaikishen Maharaj and Saswati Sen delighted in the 11 matra *Ashtamangal nritta*. The dancer concluded with the thumri *Dagar chalat dekho*. Male dancers from the North Eastern regions are also imbued with an inherent grace.

Tripura's Babi Chakravarthy performing Kuchipudi, in the the *Pravesha Daru* from *Bhama Kalapam* followed by the *Tarangam Marakatha Manimaya* was yet another example of how far off regions too have embraced our classical forms. Training under Madhavi Majumdar in Tripura, Babi's rhythmic control on the brass plate, while still short of articulating all the nattuvangam syllable combinations, the effort for one practising a tradition so isolated from the regional home of the dance form, was commendable.

The pick of the bunch of young classical dancers was Sarbani Nandi, whose clearly defined *chauka* and general Odissi profile were a pleasure to watch in the Khamaj pallavi. The entire effort of Krishna in various roles as the romancer with Gopis, his *lila-s* and feats, and *Geetopdesam*, the entire effort based on a mixed text comprising Oriya, Hindi, Sanskrit verses from Gita Govinda and the Gita (research by Kedar Misra), Vijay Goel, rhythmic contributor, Aruna Mohanty, dance composer) was fine, except for the English commentary, when Krishna reveals his cosmic identity in Kurukshetra to educate Arjuna on his dharma as a warrior, which, for this critic, was the odd inclusion which could have been accommodated in some other Indian language. Trained under teachers like

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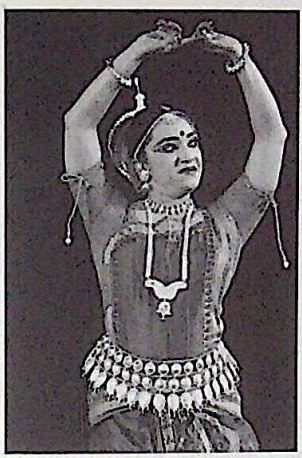

Sarbani Nandi

Duryodhana Vadham by the International Centre for Kathakali

Bichitrananda Swain, with Vijay Goel the percussionist providing the rhythmic fillers, Sarbani is an Odissi exponent to watch out for.

The International Centre for Kathakali presented *Kalyana Saugandhikam*, built round the Hanuman/Bhima encounter. Raman Kutty as Hanuman impressed in his *netrabhinaya*, though having experienced this role portrayed by legendary actors, comparisons become unavoidable. In the role of Bhima was Evoor Rajendran Pillai. What really came out very strongly in the International Centre Kathakali programmes were the three scenes from *Duryodhana Vadham* by Vayasara Aryan Narayanan Moosad, with the Raudra Bhima incident in particular rendered by Evoor Rajendran Pillai, exhibiting a side of his talent not seen before. Kalamandalam Ramankutty as Duryodhana and Srikrishna Thiruvattur Jagadeesan as Krishna, and Kalabharathy Kalakrishna as Dussasana with Kalamandalam Anil umar as Draupadi completed the cast. Draupadi pleading that Krishna's negotiations not become so successful as to eliminate the need for war, leaving her vow to avenge the humiliation heaped on her unfulfilled, was moving. Main singer Sadanam Rajagopal, melodious as accompanist for Mohiniattam performances, falls short of the authoritative Sopanam tone required for Kathakali music. He had Kalamandalam Manikandan as the supporting singer.

Anita Sharma, one of Guru Jatin Goswami's senior most students, with her disciples provided a fine Sattriya recital. In terms of presentation finesse, and group discipline, there are few to beat her productions. The other Sattriya dancer of the festival Tarali Das fell short of expectations.

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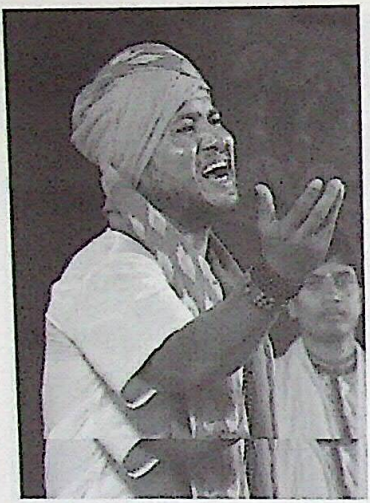

Raja Hasan

The festival presented enough variety to cause a brain fag, its highlight being SNA's discovery of two very promising young talents from the North Eastern region. 34 year old singer Raja Hasan's versatility and voice range confined to early morning *Azan* sung in the mosque, *Islamic ghazal* rendered in the Mussalman *mehfils* and commissions for composing and singing election songs for various parties, is now, with SNA's discovery a sought-after artiste on his way to stardom, singing *Baul* lyrics and for *Pala Jatra* performances. The second find is a young theatre person Kismat Banu born in Rajasthan and settled in Assam, whose own writing and acting of "Helen Keller" left the audience astounded, at the talent range of this young playwright/actor.

Rituals from Kerala's rich cultural tapestry like *Mudiyettu* tradition with Narayana Kuruppu's mind- blowing floor drawing (Kalamezhuttu) of Goddess Kali, tongue hanging out, was a rare experience for the Delhiites, the erasure of the drawing after the enactment of Kali's killing of the asura, another experience. Kerala's *Tiraiyattam* with the exotic get-up of parading characters like a *Bhadra Kali* and *Vettaikkorumagan*, *Arjuna Nrittam*, and the vibrant and explosive hangover of the old Portuguese theatre *Chevittu Natakam*, and several other traditions unfamiliar to the Northern audiences like *Puli Kali*, the actors with face and torso painted like tigers astonishingly life-like provided regaling fare. Manipur's acrobatic *Stick Dance*, Tripura's *Cherokan Dance* where graceful young women dance amidst Bamboo clappers without getting their feet caught and the fascinating non-verbal theatre of Yunnan

Tiraiyattam of Kerala

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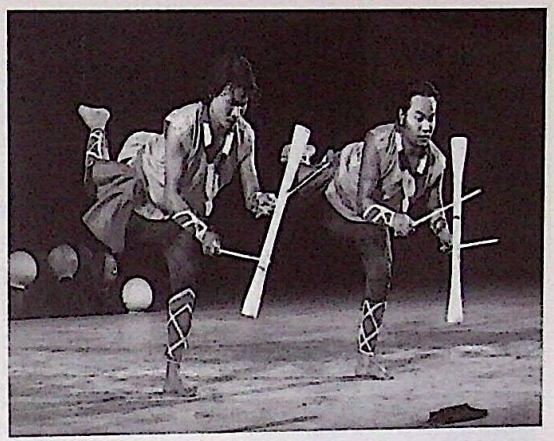
Sadanand Singh, Assam's 'Jikra Jari' Sufi singer/dancers and *Chindu Bhagavatam* from the Telugu areas were all featured. A worthwhile part formed the morning interactions with the performers– interesting and highly informative.



Stick Dance of Manipur

NATYA VRIKSHA'S WORLD DANCE FESTIVAL

World Dance Day in the capital (while in cities like Chennai, one does not know such a day exists) is beginning to spout innumerable celebrations spread over a fortnight. The annual two-day festival, organised by Geeta Chandran and the Natya Vriksha in collaboration with the IIC, attracted a large turnout, with even the aisles filled with squatting people right from the curtain- raiser of a book release. *Nava-darshanam* comprised group choreographies of five senior disciples of Natya Vriksha Dance Company in a robust display of Bharatanatyam's linear geometry based on traditional items like the *Mallari* - the arresting formations in a silence/movement contrast designed on three or more bodies. The pure dance thrust in *Samyukta* interacting with music and space, saw movements in consonance with the musical beats or in syncopation, coalescing and separating in a wave like crescendo/calm polarisation, the music by Sudha Raghuraman and Geeta Chandran ringing in other ragas by just shifting the 'tonic'. The interpretative aspect revolved round rejected woman's rancour against the two-timing lover in Dharmapuri Subbarayar's Javali *Muttavaddu Ra.* Balamuralikrishna's *Omkara Karini* portraying both blood thirsty and benevolent visions of the Goddess and Gopalakrishnan's popular lyric *Nadanamadinar* exploited different interpretative combinations through group and solo.

Very fittingly, the evening concluded with the screening of the sensitive film '*Vara*' directed by Bhutan's international film maker (Rinpoche) Khyentse Norbu. The film subtly caught the sacred/profane dilemma of devadasi-s, exploited by a hypocritical society. Excellent editing and fine acting vividly caught the skeins of life in an orthodox village, the superb impersonation by the actress in the role of

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the seductive daughter of the devadasi backed by Geeta Chandran as the Devadasi, with snippets of her *bhav*-soaked singing.

Lakshmi Viswanathan

The hallmark of Lakshmi Viswanathan's talk/ demonstration on rasa in Dance – "Inspiration and Imagination" was the undercurrent of humour making a heavy theme easily understandable for young learners. Veering away from obsessive sastra classifications, with quaint translations of Sanskrit texts into English with words like 'Horripilation', rasa, she underlined, has its birth in poetry. The craft of interpreting this (permitting countless fresh revisitations to the poetry) to evoke aesthetic delight or 'rasa' was the aim of abhinaya, requiring imagination to build up the sense of 'beauty', the first ingredient of sringar rasa. The demonstration of excerpts from padams, javalis, verses concluding with Geeta Govinda verses *Vadasiyati kinchitapi* (Music in Misra Pilu by sister Charumati, sung by Subasri on tape) had the typical Lakshmi panache.

Reddi Lakshmi

Both the young dancers chosen for the festival did their gurus proud. T.Reddi Lakshmi, despite the singer's voice finding the higher notes difficult, is a Kuchipudi find with a future. Apart from the nritta competence, the maturity of her abhinaya stood out, from Swati Tirunal's *Aaj aya Mohan Raas bankar khelenge* in Suddha Sarang to the *Kopamettulu raga* javali to the Pootana scene in Narayana Teertha's composition.

Vishal Krishna with his Kathak bravura danced his way into the audience hearts with the acrobatic tukra-s in typical Gopikrishna's Benarasi style, the innocent seduction of his Surdas Pad interpretation showing the first Radha/Krishna encounter extremely winsome.

DEBADHARA 2015

Inundated with clashing programmes, one missed the first evening featuring senior dancers Ranjana Gauhar, Darshana Jhaveri and Saroja Vaidyanathan, in

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the three day festival honouring the memory of late Odissi Guru Debaprasad Das, 'Debadhara', at the Stein auditorium. The second evening had its curtain raiser in guru Gajendra Panda presenting Odissi along with Archana Sahu, his disciple, also a film actress. *Mangalacharan* with its homage to Hari Hara saw the Guru/disciple combining well, except for the drut passage at the end, where fleeting lack of synchronisation was visible. The next solo in the bhakti mode saw Gajendra Panda offer his prayers to Lord Jagannath in *Mano uddhara karo he karana* set to Arabhi raga. Choosing an interpretative item was wise for it communicated with the audience.

The Kuchipudi couple Vanashree and Jaya Rama Rao with their disciples presented the dance which without sacrificing the traditional identity revealed a freshness of approach in the choreography. *Omkaram* built round an abstract theme was performed to abstract music devised by Ganesh, Venkat and Rama Rao. As the group froze in silent formations offering homage to *Omkaram Bindu Samyuktam* the *Rudra Chamakam* recitation of epithets of Shiva, the echo effects produced in the music and the ghatam interventions had a sound quality evoking images – which was what the theme needed.

Ardhanariswar, as a duet by Vanashree and Jaya Rama Rao became a strong complimentary of contrasts in the male/female entities enshrined in one being. The male/female voices, the *Dhammila/Jatadhara* polarities, the music in a ragamalika of Arabhi, Mohanam and Pantuvarali, and the tala set to a khanda rhythm, invested the number with special verve.

Tarangam was again a group presentation *Shiva Shiva Bhava Bhava Sharanam*, with five persons simultaneously performing the dancing on brass plates. Here again the four female dancers in a group with the lone male dancer Rama Rao as a kind of solo counter point had a special appeal.

The fine Kuchipudi recital was followed by Uma Sharma's Kathak with her group of students. In the drut speed the *Natawari Nritya* by the students was rendered at breakneck speed. Then Uma's solo took over and following the *Adharam Madhuram* invocation came the Surdas Pad describing the first Krishna/Radha encounter. Uma's demonstration of how to elaborate on phrases like *Mohe ankhe dikaoge* with the eyes doing all the speaking and how the abstraction of words like *meri gully aagi* could take on myriad forms of expression in the *abhinaya*, was educative for many in the audience, showing dance communicating in a minimalist language without the brouhaha of articulated rhythm.

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DANCE-DRAMA

Now established as a sure favourite with all audiences, the dance drama had its share of representations during this period. Apart from ready themes available in our myths and poetic works, this genre has often become a convenient tool for new productions, at times with very little thinking on the part of choreographers. Of the ones one chose to attend, was a nifty *Chandalika* presented by Kolkata's Sanskriti Kalakendra , under the choreography of Anita Malik. The Bharatanatyam mode in which the production was devised, based on music in the typical Tagore style of rendition in Bengalee, made the dance, for the first few minutes, take on a muted, nondescript mode not pertaining to any particular dance form. But gradually, that movements were derived from Bharatanatyam, became clearer. But more impressive was the very adroit, neat treatment without fussy frills, making the narrative taut and fast moving. Anita as the mother of Chandalika played a sensitive role and all the characters were rendered with a degree of involvement, with the witchcraft scenes too portrayed with some imagination.

Another dance drama was by Geeta Mahalik's institution Upasana presenting *Vishnupada Rasamrta*, a homage to Vishnu, in praise of the feet of the Lord. Strung to three episodes from Vishnupurana the straight-forward unexceptional choreography without virtuosic feats (perhaps Ahalya as a stone could have been shown in a better way) was neat. Geeta took the prominent female roles. The guest male dancers, Prakash Mohanty and Sushant Maharana acquitted themselves well. In young Rajnikant Mohanty who has stage presence and grace, Geeta has a promising disciple. Lyrics by N.K.Misra, an expert in Sanskrit, Sukanta Kundu's score, and rhythmic inputs with percussion by Dhaneswar Swain provided the take-off base for the dance.

DISCUSSION AND DANCE

Quite out of the usual run of episodes, a two-day event conceived by Shovana Narayan and mounted by her institution Asavari at SNA's Meghdoot auditorium, combined intellectual with visual fare. The first evening, discussion centred round the idea of '*Ramatwa*' or an abstraction of what *Ramness* stands for, evoking references about the epic hero's treatment of Sita, had Swami Srivatsa Goswami pick out the epic hero's fleeting interaction with Shabari, the blind old woman whose pre-tasted berries, Rama partook of, with the greatest of pleasure. The endearing term by which he addressed Shabari was not used by him even for his wife Sita. This incident for the speaker best described what *Ramness* was all about. For speaker Ashok Vajpeyi, the entire visualisation of Rama which was

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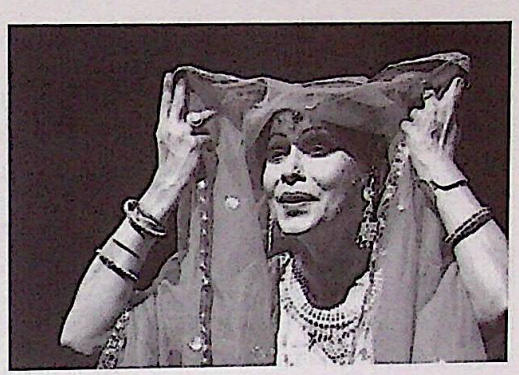

Shovana Narayan

through Valmiki's poetry to start with, would remain in the artistic consciousness of India, though life as lived would never live up to any of his ideals. For Meher Jafer, a journalist from Lucknow, *Ramatwa* uncomfortably close to *Hindutwa*, was frightening for persons of her ilk. She loved Rama and his story, not *Ramatwa*. After this stimulating discussion moderated by this writer, the performance by Asavari dancers followed by a brilliant concluding phase by Shovana was based on a modern work "Kab Aoge Ram". The protagonist refusing to forgive Rama for subjecting Sita to *Agni-pariksha*, asks: "Did you put yourself through a similar ordeal when you, for days on end, had stayed alone and away from her in your palace surrounded by women? But Rama did not go unpunished by Sita, for through her dignified exit to the underworld she confined him to lifelong exile.

The next evening the discussion had the 'veil' as the theme, moderated by Manjari Sinha. Pavan Varma's erudite talk with references from the Vedas, Ghalib's poetry, the Quran and Shankara was on the veil as ignorance hiding the real *Chidaananda atma* from realisation. For Arshiya Sethi the veil symbolised servility and downtrodden woman in a patriarchal society. Ravindra Misra, the writer on music and dance concentrated on the subtle uses of the *ghungat* in Kathak. And Asavari's dance visualisation based on Ismat Chugtai's story *Ghungat* where the veil and its removal on the first night of marriage (the groom demands that the bride remove the veil herself while she waited for the conventional manner of the groom removing the veil) becomes a battle of wills, between bride and groom leading to tragic lifelong separation. Shobana's intense interpretation poignantly highlighted the male/female clashing egos, symbolised in the veil. A fine integration of food for the mind and the senses!

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Shiva with his idiosyncratic get-up is undoubtedly the primordial hippie, much before the cult became so fashionable during the sixties in America with the Beatles and others of their ilk attracting a kind of maniacal fan following from all

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over the west. But Gowri Ramnarayan's new production 'Fire and Ash' by Just Us Theatre, like most of her earlier works integrating art disciplines in an aesthetic togetherness had the stage setting full of aesthetic simplicity, dealing with ancient symbols from myth with an enquiring contemporary mind. The King of contradictions, Shiva is the creator and destroyer, a passionate lover and also the ultimate in austerity -- the fire of his intense meditation even reducing forests to ash, the God whose home is on the icy Himalayan slopes, dances on the burning crematorium. Epitomising male power, he is also Ardhanariswarar incorporating in the left half of his body Parvati. What makes a modern world so enslaved by consumerist excesses still worship this Shiva whose needs are so frugal? This King of dancers through the abandon of his dance makes the cosmos evolve. And the cosmos is made up of contradictions, the polarities comprising inevitable opposites, one existing because of, and drawing its identity from, the other, as day from night. In fact, creation exists with destruction. So Shiva who epitomises the cosmos underlined in the famous lines "Anikam Bhuvanam'....." incorporates in one being, co-existing polarities complementing each other.

Gowri's narration as the Sutradhar and Savita Narasimhan's lilting music are the two main poles on which Fire and Ash rests. The third participant providing the dance element was Kalakshetra trained dancer Anjana Anand, a tall figure whose movements have a wide arm spread. The very first view of Shiva as the Nayaka, is imagined through the response of the dancer to the Lord as the procession passes by. "Will he not turn round and spare me a glance?" the smitten woman wonders in this Muttutandavar composition "Teruvil Vaaraano" in Kamas raga, rendered in all its melodic sweetness by Savita. Based on the poetry of Kalidas' *Kumara Sambhavam* was the power of the meditating Shiva, the heat of his intense tapas scorching the forest, with Parvati's entry causing some green shoots to emerge on the surface of the parched earth! With intense love, Parvati offers her homage. To make Shiva respond, Madana shoots his flowered Mohanam (in the same raga) darts, disturbing the deep penance, only to be burnt to ashes with the angry fire from Shiva's third eye. Tagore's song of Shiva in a trance, did not quite come off, the Bengali intonation, not Savita's strong point. A rare Surdas composition describing Shiva, the wandering traveller coming all the way from his icy home to the plains of Brindavan to see and bless baby Krishna, much to the fear of Yashoda, who as a mother lacks the insight to recognise that she is in the presence of two Gods – one in her arms and the other standing at her doorstep. One felt that Shiva, the fiery dancer and the ultimate Shivam based on Shreejith Krishna's nritta passage, a lengthy scene, needed more authoritative nritta visualisation than what Anjana's dance could provide. Shreejith Krishna would have been excellent in this role and a twosome as Yashoda (Anjana) and Shiva

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(Shreejith) in a dialogue in the Surdas composition would have made for good variety. A thought for the producer!

FLYING MACHINES

The other very rare production of *Antariksha Sanchar* by Abhinaya Aradhana run by Jayalakshmi Eshwar, delving into a theme of flying in the skies with instruments, using the very grounded Bharatanatyam form as the body language, deserved hearty congratulations. Jayalakshmi Eshwar married to a pilot, has for long ruminated on the idea of capturing the subject of flying machines through dance visualisation. The audience which went with little expectations came away full of praise at the attempt. The textual base provided by the research of S Raghuraman into *Shivagachintamani*, Sangam literature, Bharadwaj's 4th century *Vyamanika Sastra*, and the epics, provided an ideal base. Comprising quotes of sages about bird-like vimanas, mythological references about self-moving aerial machines, one could sense how perceptions of becoming weightless and moving in the skies like the birds – had been conceived by ancient minds in India. Exercises through which one filled oneself with air (prana-vayu) so as to fight gravity and fly with the wind as Hanuman is believed to have done, was part of the very absorbing narrative. Ramayana mentions the *Pushpa Vimana* which Ravana won from the Gods and in which Rama with Sita returns to Ayodhya. As the vimana is flying through the forest area, Rama relives the incidents that had taken place at various landmarks. Jayalakshmi very intelligently had scenes cast in the Chhau idiom, choreographed by Shashadhar Acharya. With specialised dancers, the tremendous balance required in this dance form, with only one leg grounded and the other weaving geometrical movements in aerial space had the requisite body language, creating the feel of flight. Quotes from *Manimekhalai* about Manipallavadheema becoming a Buddhist acquiring the power of levitation, from *Silappadikaram*, mentioning Kovalan's return to Kaveripoompattinam on a flying Hamsa (swan) as vehicle, from *Akashatantra,* where the body of the flying machine is indistinguishable from the sky with flying devices designed to look like birds, with signals received and conversations heard, of the machine becoming impossible to detect etc., were all part of the narrative recited and visualised. Set to music by persons like Kalaimamani O.S.Arun and Gopal Rao, with music production by Ananta Tyagarajan, the group formations and general choreographic patterning were very cleverly done. In the final analysis, to have created the message of flying machines, using techniques like Bharatanatyam aided by Chhau, was a brave move. Musical effects through varied forms of percussion and instruments added a great deal to the impact.

All photos courtesy: Avinash Pasricha

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Yog Parv–A Confluence of Yoga, and the Visual and Performing Arts

MADHAVI PURANAM

The International Day of Yoga was celebrated on 21 June across 177 countries and keeping with the spirit, the Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA), launched a weeklong festival (21-27 June, 2015), *Yog Parv*, at its Rabindra Bhavan complex. A detailed coverage will be published in our Delhi Diary by Leela Venkataraman in the next issue. Here is a photo feature with a brief on the festival.

Helen Acharya, Secretary Sangeet Natak Akademi, shares with *Nartanam*:

"I am happy that this festival was initiated by the Sangeet Natak Akademi on the direction of Ministry of culture. The concept started when I visited Paris for the inscription of Thateras as SNA is the nodal agency for filing nominations to the intangible cultural heritage UNESCO list. I met Ms Ruchira Kambhoj who is the PRI (Permanent Resident Member) at UNESCO. She threw up the idea of taking up Yoga for the next nomination. This was much before the UN had declared June 21 as the Yoga International Day. We started working on the dossier and the film for Yoga in 2014. In the course of this we discovered that all the historical evidences, and scriptures elucidate the concept of Yoga and its philosophy and being the body of performing arts I saw how Yoga integrates itself in the performing arts in the diverse cultural expression that *Bharat* has. The ministry of culture asked us to curate an exhibition and I was very glad as we had enough material in the performing arts and the visual arts. So we conceived the festival *Yog Parva*. *Yog Chakra* is the exhibition where we have all the creative aspects of the visual artists, through paintings, sculptures and installations. 14 institutions have come together to put together this exhibition. Lalit Kala Akademi has partnered us by giving the space for the exhibition. The *Yog Parva* became complete when the performing arts

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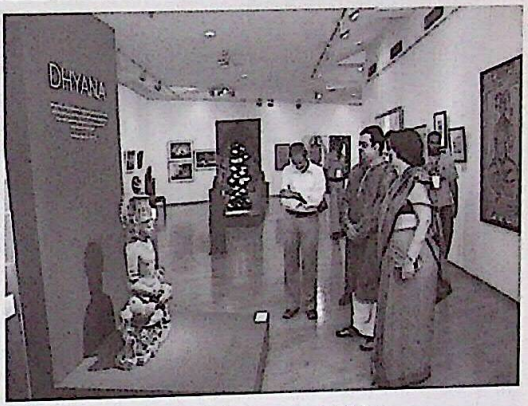
fraternity from across the country came together to share their works and thoughts. Dr Sonal Mansingh did the opening lecture. I am glad that we could put this unique festival at such a short notice. We intend to make this an annual festival, exploring the subject in its depth, involving a wider cross section of arts and artists in the future editions."

Yogini Vrishanana sculpture



Yoga chakra – an exhibition

An impressive exhibition of more than 350 pieces of rare sculpture, paintings, metal work, photographs, and various other mediums — contemporary and antique — on yoga and its various practices and beliefs was curated in the Lalita Kala Akademi (LKA) gallery. They were sourced from premier bodies like the SNA, LKA, National Museum, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and National Archives, all in New Delhi; Indian Museum and Asiatic Society from Kolkata, Allahabad Museum, Allahabad, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, Indian Contemporary Art, Jaipur and the Museum of Sacred Art, Belgium and Lloyds India.

The document "Yoga Chakra" on the exhibition was brought out which with relevant notes on the exhibits could have been more valuable. The Hindi souvenir "Yog parv" has put together precious thoughts on Yoga.

The talks, lecture demonstrations, performances during the *Yog Parv*, all, aimed to explore, celebrate and document the essence of yoga in the performing and visual arts. Performing artists from across the country were invited to share their works and thoughts. The festival started and closed with a talk by the acclaimed

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Inauguration of *Yog Parv*

dancer Sonal Mansingh. A charming speaker, Sonal's closing speech fell short of a definitive summing up of the weeklong festival. While some of the artists/ scholars could present precise and concise insights through their lectures and performance, most others displayed the bane of not adhering to the brief given and as a result their thoughts did not find expression in a cohesive fashion.

Some of the artists and scholars at the festival were Vasundhara Doraiswami (Bharatanatyam), Chetan Joshi (Flute), Ranjana Gauhar (Odissi), Mandakini Trivedi (Mohiniattam), Nandini Ramani (Bharatanatyam), Sandhya Purecha (Bharatanatyam), Nalini (Kathak), Aloka Kanungo (Odissi), Tadepally Lokanadha

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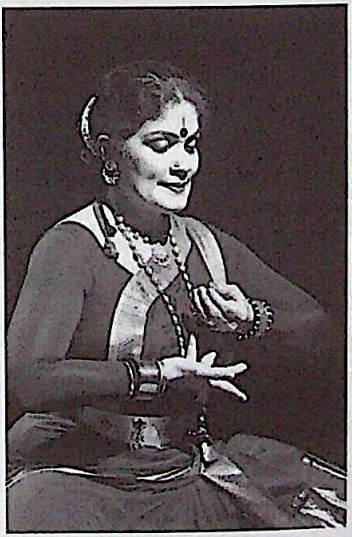
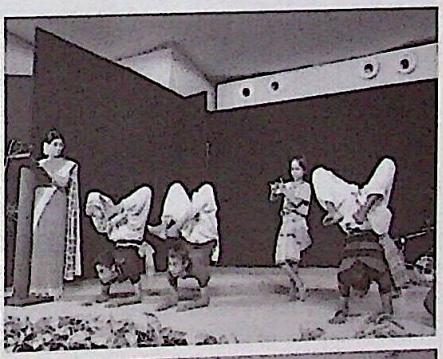
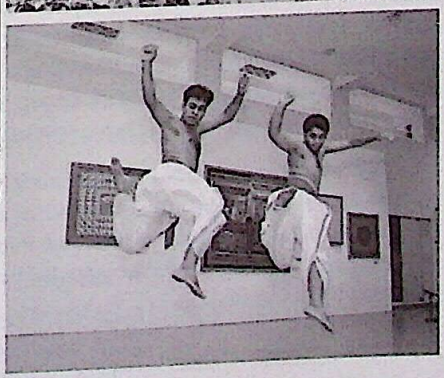
Mandakini Trivedi

Sonal Mansingh







Clockwise from left:
Geeta Chandran,
Aloka Kanungo with disciples,
Dancers of SNA's Chhau Project

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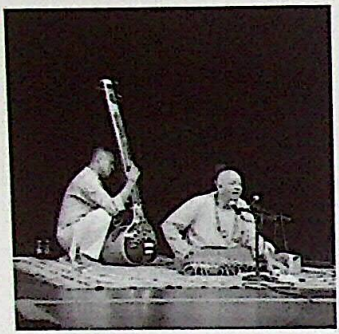
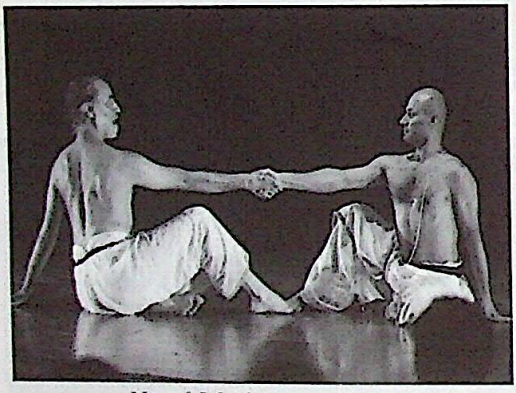


Tadepalli Lokanadha Sarma

Thang-ta artists in a display



Navtej Johar's presentation

Sarma (Carnatic music), Geeta Chandran (Bharatanatyam), SRD Prasad Gurukkal (Kalaripayettu), Kuleshwar Kumar Thakur (Mayurbhanj Chhau), Kalamandalam Sangeeth Chakyar (Kutiyattam), Masako Ono (Odissi), Nisha Mahajan (Kathak and yoga), Sadhya group, Chittaranjan Acharya (Odissi), Navtej Johar (Bharatanatyam), V. Sumitra (Carnatic music), Ashok Kumar, Samir Chandra Seth and Lakshmi Narayan (Flute), dancers of SNA's Chhau Project, Laxmipriya Goptipua Nritya Kendra, Kolkata, Basu Singh, Bipul Ray (Santoor), SNA's trainees of Padams and Javalis, and artists of Ustad Imamuddin Khan Dagar Music, Art and Culture, and Alka Tyagi and Sanya Tyagi (Yoga workshops). This writer presented an academic investigation on Yoga and the Dance spectator.

Yoga is an ancient heritage which definitely needs to be explored and deliberated upon in the context of performing arts and the academia. Thus, the SNA's proposal to make it an annual event is a welcome initiative which could take this year's worthy beginning to greater heights by bringing more arts and artists and academicians to its fold.

Photos Courtesy: Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi

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We request the festival organizers to update us about their programs well in advance, which will facilitate our editorial team to carry a brief news item or to deploy a suitable critic to report/review the festival.

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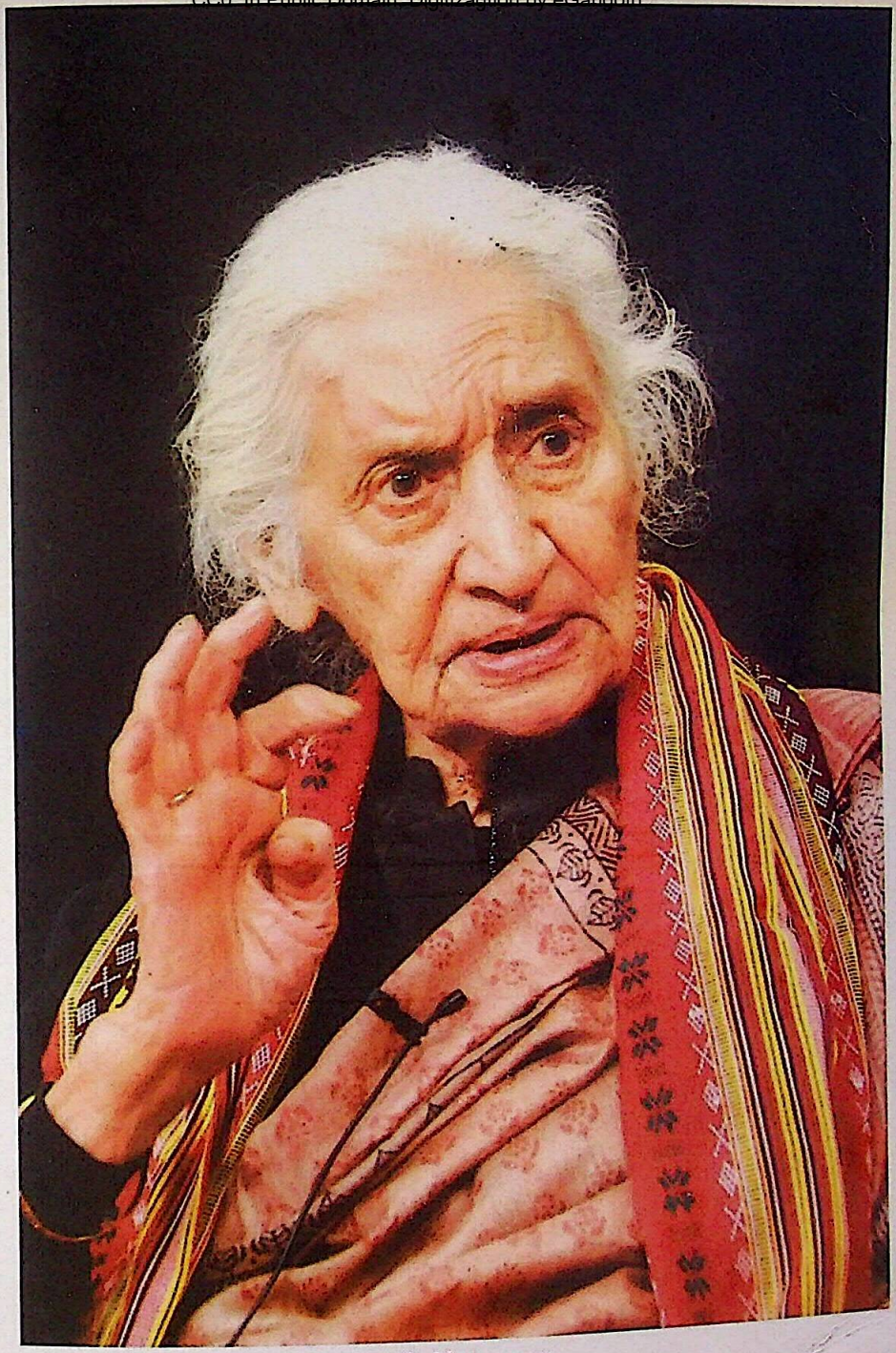

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan

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